# THE TRUE CHATTERTON

00021708

JOHN H. INGRAM

BOMBAY BRANCH

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# THE TRUE CHATTERTON

BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

OF

JOHN H. INGRAM

LIFE AND LETTERS OF EDGAR A. POE.

OLIVER MADOX BROWN: A Biography.

LIFE OF ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

CLAIMANTS TO ROYALTY.

THE ALLEGED PORTRAIT OF CHATTERTON.

From an engraving after N. C. Branwhite's picture.

# THE TRUE CHATTERTON

## A NEW STUDY FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

BY

JOHN H. INGRAM

T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
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"What a sad, beautiful, but heart-wringing romance is itself the story of Chatterton!"

WILLIAM HOWITT.

# PREFACE

SEVERAL years ago, in a paper on "Chatterton and his Associates," contributed to *Harper's Magazine*, I showed that the last word had not been said about the boy poet, neither had all the discoverable material concerning him been published. This work is intended to make good the deficiencies referred to. New matter contained in this volume comprises "The Exhibition" and other, shorter poems, various pieces of unknown and unpublished verse, and very many items of interest now first published, or published correctly for the first time.

The object of this biography is not only to furnish new facts but to refute old falsehoods; to represent known truths in a new light, and to describe the events of Chatterton's career in a more connected manner than his chroniclers have hitherto deemed necessary. A new interpretation has been given to Barrett's dealings with the lad, and a certain amount of complicity on the surgeon's part regarding the manufacture of some of the Rowley Manuscripts has been proved; a different aspect from that prevalent has been put upon Lambert's treatment of his apprentice; a rigid exclusion has been made of the state-

ments attributed to Mrs. Edkins, out of which so much untrustworthy biography has been fabricated ; it is shown that the assertions made by Professor Wilson and his copyists, that Burgum, Baker, Thistlethwaite, and others were scholars at Colston's Hospital, are incorrect and, consequently, the theories founded upon such assumptions are fallacious ; a natural reason is given to explain why Chatterton was impelled to pass off his own work as that of mediæval writers ; the date of his composition of the Rowley papers is fixed, and a true account of Horace Walpole's conduct towards the young poet is furnished. In no previous biography have these matters been satisfactorily dealt with.

It has been no easy task to disentangle the true from the false, for not only have opinions, anecdotes, and dates been found contradictory and fictitious, but even tombstones and parish registers have proved inaccurate. Sir Robert Walpole is recorded to have said of biographies, "I know they are all lies," and those experienced in that department of literature will agree that in many instances the politician's dictum needs little qualification. Chatterton's memoirs have been falsified and distorted by Thistlethwaite, by John Dix, and even by the highly respected Joseph Cottle ; his character has been vilified by Horace Walpole and his entourage ; his writings have been corrupted by Catcott and Barrett ; works not by him have been imputed to his pen, whilst even grammatical errors are ascribed to him, because of his adherence to the practice of ancient authors. The much slandered Chatterton never did anything so discreditable as did

many of those who have written about his deeds : as did Barrett, Sir Herbert Croft, Horace Walpole, John Dix, and others. Walter Thornbury considered that Dix "has confused, entangled, and corrupted the subject of Chatterton's life in such a way that only the Last Day can ever set it right!" but Mr. Harry Buxton Forman, with more trust in the truth, says, "Surely in these days of rigid and exact inquiry it is not beyond possibility to separate fact from fiction," and in this work it is believed the possibility has been accomplished.

Professor Wilson's biographical study of Chatterton shows more research and greater sympathy with its subject than any previous record of the lad, but, unfortunately, its author's animadversions upon the work of his predecessors will apply equally to his own. It is rather a collection of materials for a biography than a biography. It is notoriously replete with misprints, mistakes, misstatements, and incorrect conclusions derived from faulty premisses, so that it is unsafe to trust to any of its assertions without confirmatory evidence ; nevertheless, much that Wilson urges in extenuation of having attempted to produce another biography of one whose life has been written so often, is applicable to the present work.

It is a more pleasant duty to be able to offer grateful recognition of their aidful labours to many of my predecessors. The poet's contemporaries, Dean Milles, Bryant, and other Rowleyites, wrote according to their light, and if their opinions are valueless, many of their records are trustworthy. Although Sir Herbert Croft's conduct was not honourable, we owe

to his investigation the fact that nearly all the domestic correspondence of the poet and the record of many of the chief incidents of his life were preserved for posterity. The writings of Gregory, Tyrwhitt, Malone, T. Warton, C. V. Le Grice, C. B. Willcox, Southey, Cottle, and George Pryce have helped towards the attainment of a truthful record of Chatterton's career, whilst in recent times Professors Wilson and Skeat, Mr. Edward Bell, the Rev. Dr. H. P. Stokes, and others, have rendered my labours lighter by their special and patient examination of the facts of the poet's life and works.

Chalmers, in 1810, appears to have been the first to suggest that Chatterton's chief authority for the antique words he used in his Rowley Manuscripts was Bailey's Dictionary, but it was left to C. V. Le Grice, the schoolfellow and friend of Charles Lamb, to furnish proof of the fact. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1838 he gave a complete exposition of the poet's plan of resorting to Bailey for his archaic words, and showed, as an example of his familiarity with Bailey's compilation, that all the strange words in Chatterton's quaint letter to his friend William Smith were extracted from that lexicon and that the signature to the epistle, so carelessly misprinted by Cottle, is only an anagram of "Thomas Chatterton." Le Grice, whose annotated copy of Gregory's Life of the poet it is my good fortune to possess, anticipated some recent discoveries about Chatterton and his scheme of work, whilst Professor Skeat completed the proof as to the lad's system of workmanship in his introductory "Essay on the Rowley Poems," and made as well a modernised

version of the poems themselves, for the Aldine edition of the lad's metrical productions.

My warmest thanks are due to Dr. Anthony Finn, Head Master of Colston's School, for placing at my service the results of his researches in the records of that institution and for other kind assistance; to Mr. Harry Goodwin Rooth for permission to use a copy of his portrait of G. S. Catcott; to the Committee of the Bristol Art Gallery for permission to make use of their invaluable collection of Chatterton manuscripts, and to Mr. Richard Quick, the Superintendent, for his courteous aid in the inspection; whilst I am under much obligation to the British Museum authorities for the inspection and use of their extensive collection of Chattertoniana.

Finally, I am, as are all admirers of the boy bard's work, deeply indebted to Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton for his wholly admirable and most important contribution to literary criticism in an essay on Chatterton, in "Ward's Poets." It is remarkable for showing, and showing for the first time, the real value and artistic merit of Chatterton's poetry; its effect upon the tone and character of the lyrical works of some of his greatest successors and, through them, upon modern English poetic literature generally.

JOHN H. INGRAM.

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# BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

| | |
|---|---|
| . . 1713. | Thomas Chatterton senior born. |
| January 21, 1722. | Entered Colston's Hospital School. |
| September 29, 1729. | Apprenticed to Captain Edmund Saunders. |
| . . 1739. | Appointed Master of Pile Street School. |
| April 25, 1748 (?). | Married to Sarah Young. |
| February 14, 1749. | His daughter, Mary Chatterton (afterwards Newton), born. |
| August 3, 1752. | Thomas Chatterton senior died. |

---

| | |
|---|---|
| November 20, 1752. | Thomas Chatterton junior, the poet, born. |
| January 1, 1753. | Baptized at St. Mary Redcliff. |
| . . 1757. | Placed at Pile Street Free School. |
| August 3, 1760. | Entered Colston's Hospital School. |
| January 8, 1763. | His first known verses published. |
| July 1, 1767. | Apprenticed to Mr. John Lambert, scrivener. |
| October 1, 1768. | First "Rowley" paper, "Description of the Mayor passing over the Old Bridge," appeared in *Farley's Bristol Journal.* |
| November, 1768. | Introduced to G. S. Catcott and E. Barrett. |

December 21, 1768. First letter to J. Dodsley.
February 15, 1769. Second letter to J. Dodsley.
March 25, 1769. First letter to H. Walpole.
March 30, 1769. Second letter to H. Walpole.
April 8, 1769. Third letter to H. Walpole.
April 14, 1769. Fourth letter to H. Walpole.
July 24, 1769. Fifth letter to H. Walpole.
April 24, 1770. Leaves Bristol for London.
August 24, 1770. Dies in Brook Street, London.

VIEW OF BRISTOL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

From an old print.

To face p. 19.

# THE TRUE CHATTERTON

## CHAPTER I

### PARENTAGE

FOR considerably over one hundred years previous to the birth of Thomas Chatterton, the poet, the Chaddertons had been connected in various lowly positions with the Church of St. Mary Redcliff, Bristol, but their connection with that beautiful Gothic edifice had always been of a humble character, chiefly as sextons. Little trustworthy is known of any member of the family beyond the fact that they all, save the poet's father, were of the mechanic class, and innumerable documents and records have been overhauled to prove even that much. They had been born, named, wedded and buried, without having ever attempted or aspired, as far as can be learned, to anything higher than the lowly occupations they followed.

Of the many conflicting details of the poet's immediate ancestors it may now be asserted that the last member of the family who served the post of sexton and bore the name of Chatterton was John

Chatterton, the poet's great-uncle. He died in the same year as his nephew, the poet's father, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff, where he had officiated for twenty years. As the particulars of this man's age and death have been so variously stated by the biographers, and as he is erroneously considered to have been the poet's grandfather, of whom nothing is really known, a copy of his epitaph is subjoined. From this it is learned that John Chatterton died in 1752, aged forty-eight years :—

Near this place
In a cold bed of another's making
Lies JOHN CHATTERTON.
Who was Death's chamberlain Here
ffor twenty years
And after having provided lodgings
ffor Various Passing Travellers,
Lay down himself.
A.D. 1752 of his sojourning 48.

When living, John, Pursuant to his trade,
Many Good Beds for weary Pilgrims made ;
May the same kindness now for their Host receive,
Dead John will be among them—by their Leave.

The nephew of this sexton, Thomas Chatterton senior, born in 1713, was the first member of the family known to have attained to any higher position in society than the relative just referred to. By his abilities he raised himself above the circumscribed position of his race. He possessed loftier aspirations and was more talented and better educated than were his immediate progenitors. An interesting fact respecting this Thomas Chatterton, which has not

been previously made known, is that he was educated at the same public school in which his famous son afterwards spent nearly eight years of his short life. This senior Thomas Chatterton, of the parish of St. Mary Redcliff, was placed upon the foundation of Colston's Hospital, on January 21, 1722, he being nearly nine years old. He was nominated by the executors of the founder, Mr. Colston. The records contain no notices of his school career, but state that on leaving the establishment, on September 5, 1729, he was apprenticed to a Captain Ed. Saunders, evidently the Edmund Saunders described in the Bristol Poll Books for 1772 and 1734 as a "Freeholder of the Parish of St. Mary Redclift."

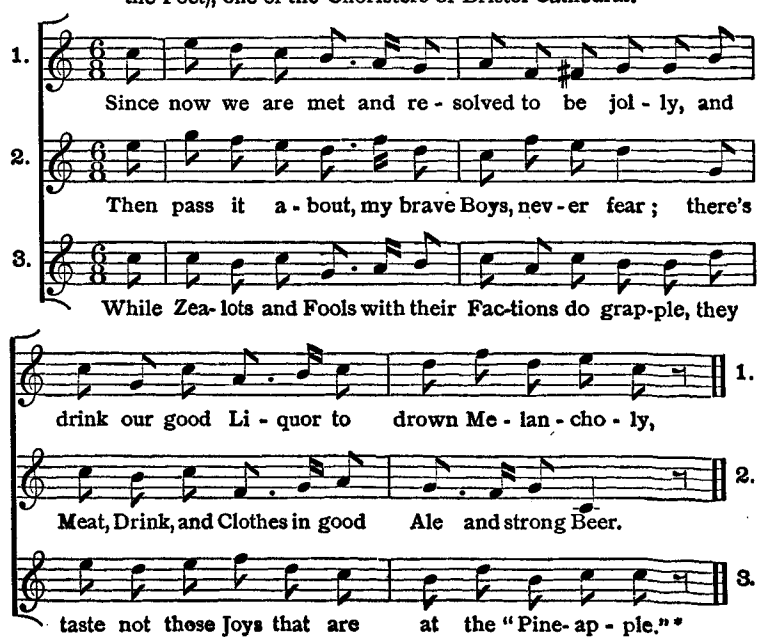
It is said the senior Chatterton's elegant handwriting subsequently procured him a situation with a firm of London solicitors, by whom he was employed in engrossing deeds, and that afterwards he became writing-master in a classical school, where he acquired a knowledge of Latin. He is described as "Writing Master, St. Mary Redcliff," in a Bristol Poll Book for 1739, and during that year he was appointed master of the Pile Street Free School, a position he held until his death on August 7, 1752.

Being well versed in music the schoolmaster employed his leisure time in writing out pieces for use in the Cathedral, where his talents procured him a lay clerkship. His appointment by the Dean and Chapter as one of the Chaunters in the Bristol Cathedral is dated January, 1745. Chatterton was a composer of music himself, but in a small way, if the accompanying "catch" for three voices is to

be regarded as a fair specimen of his capabilities. It is said to have been composed by him in commemoration of certain festivities held periodically in a Bristol tavern designated "The Pine Apple." This catch may not fully justify the character given Chatterton by a contemporary, of "a complete master of the theory and practice of music," but can be accepted as a proof that he did possess some knowledge of his profession. The catch is given so that its author's musical powers may be gauged by the reader:

### A CATCH FOR THREE VOICES.

The Words and Music by Mr. CHATTERTON (Father to THOMAS CHATTERTON the Poet), one of the Choristers of Bristol Cathedral.


1.
Since now we are met and re - solved to be jol - ly, and
2.
Then pass it a - bout, my brave Boys, nev - er fear; there's
3.
While Zea - lots and Fools with their Fac-tions do grap-ple, they
drink our good Li - quor to drown Me - lan - cho - ly,
1.
Meat, Drink, and Clothes in good Ale and strong Beer.
2.
taste not those Joys that are at the "Pine - ap - ple."*
3.

* The "Pine-apple" was the public-house where the Club met every week.

It is said Chatterton wrote verse also, although nothing more than the words of this catch have been preserved as evidence of the fact. "The Pine Apple," the chaunter is accredited with singing the delights of, was a tavern kept by a Mr. Golden, a bookbinder by trade, where a club Chatterton was a member of was held.

The schoolmaster is stated to have been a great reader, but as books were not too plentiful in those days, he was accustomed to borrow them wherever he could, lending his own in return. Edward Gardner, son of a member of "The Pine Apple" Club, recollected that his father and Chatterton senior frequently lent books to each other, both being fond of reading. Gardner intimates that the schoolmaster was somewhat inclined to a belief in magic and was deeply versed in Cornelius Agrippa's writings. To these various acquirements may be added an inclination to antiquarian pursuits. His collection of Roman coins was well known and included several hundreds which had been discovered at Kenmoor and other places in the neighbourhood. In his "History of Bristol" Barrett states the schoolmaster presented these coins to Sir J. Smith of Ashton Court, who appeared somewhat surprised at the able manner in which their donor described them.

When about thirty-five years of age the schoolmaster was married to Sarah Young of Stapleton, a girl, apparently, in the same lowly sphere of life as her husband. Mrs. Chatterton, or Chadderton, as it was spelt in some of the official records, was only about seventeen when she became a wife,

being less than half her husband's age. The marriage took place at Chipping Sodbury, a few miles from Bristol, presumably in 1748, but owing to the defective state of the register of that period the date is not certain. There is no trustworthy evidence to show that the marriage was not a happy one during the few years it lasted, although the alleged testimony of a Mrs. Edkins, given in the discredited pages of an inaccurate book, has been frequently quoted in recent works to prove the contrary. (*Vide* Appendix A.)

About a year after their marriage the Chattertons moved into the schoolhouse in Pile Street, which had recently been built for the use of the schoolmaster, at an outlay of £120, by a Mr. Giles Malpas. On February 14, 1749, a daughter was born in the new house and was named Mary, and subsequently a son, named Giles Malpas after the kindly donor of the schoolhouse, was born there, but only lived for a few months.

From what has been said about the schoolmaster of this Bristol Free School, it will be gathered that he was a man of more than ordinary ability for his social position and the times he lived in; but there was another side to his character. He possessed eccentricities which, though harmless in themselves, divided him off from his neighbours, and made him a mark for their observation. He talked little, was absent-minded in company, and was given to walking alone by the riverside, muttering to himself and gesticulating with his arms and, "like all his family, he was so proud." With such peculiarities and

accomplishments in the father it is not very difficult to divine whence the son, the boy poet, derived his more marked idiosyncrasies, however abnormal they may appear. This Thomas Chatterton, the schoolmaster, died on the 7th of August, 1752, in the thirty-ninth year of his age.

Many years after the schoolmaster's death, and when the subject of the Rowley manuscripts was exciting public attention, his daughter, Mrs. Newton, writing to Southey, said, "It is unnecessary to inform you by what means the parchments were in our possession. My father received them in the year 1750. He discovered by some writings he found among them that persons of the name of Chadderdon were sextons of St. Mary Redclift parish 120 years before. His father had affirmed the family had held that Office, to use his own phrase, 'Time out of mind.'"

Although it was not necessary to tell Southey how the Chattertons had become connected with the Rowley parchments, it is necessary to explain the circumstances to the reader. Over the north porch of St. Mary Redcliff Church is a room known as the Muniment Room, from the fact of it having contained several large chests of deeds relating to the building. One of these chests was the depository of documents left by William Canynges, a very wealthy citizen of Bristol, and five times Mayor of that place during the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV. A sum of money had been left for the preservation and annual opening of "Mr. Canynge's Cofre," as the largest chest was styled, but in the

course of centuries this yearly inspection had been neglected. In 1727 it occurred to the authorities that valuable documents might be contained in these chests, therefore, as the keys were all lost, Mr. Canynges's coffer and the other six chests were forced open and searched. Such deeds and documents as appeared to relate to the church were taken away, but all the remaining parchments, with criminal carelessness, were left scattered about the chamber floor. These centuries-old documents, some of which may have been of considerable historical and topographical interest, were left to perish in the damp and dirt.

It would seem that no restriction was put upon visitors helping themselves to these ancient parchments had they cared to do so, but some, to whom they were pointed out, declined the burden of such valueless rubbish. One woman admitted that she had carried away a lapful to use in cleaning her kitchen utensils, and other persons had taken some for similar mean purposes. The schoolmaster, Chatterton, besides having an uncle sexton and being personally acquainted with all the officials of the church, naturally had access to the different parts of the building. As he could find uses for the parchment he was permitted, or availed himself of the opportunity, to take away as many of the documents as he liked, and with the assistance of his schoolboys he had carried off at one time as much as what was called a "Maund" basket would hold, and stored them away in the school cupboard.

From time to time these parchments were used in the schoolhouse for various purposes. It is related

that on one occasion, when the vicar of Redcliff made a present of twenty Bibles to the school, which were given away to the twenty boys who could read best, Chatterton, the better to preserve the prizes, cut up some of the old parchments and covered the volumes with them. Notwithstanding this destruction, much interest in these old records is said to have been taken by the schoolmaster, who traced among them references to members of his own family in connection with the place of their deposit, the venerable and beautiful church of St. Mary Redcliff. Although Chatterton senior was able to read these ancient documents, and trace records of his own ancestors in them, evidently he never met with any writings by Rowley, or any one else, which, notwithstanding his poetic taste and antiquarian proclivities, he deemed worth preservation. He regarded these vellum deeds as useful only for the commonest domestic purposes.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD

HER husband's death left Mrs. Chatterton a widow of one-and-twenty, with a child of three years old to support, and the early expectation of another, as well as the charge of an aged mother-in-law. Fortunately, her husband's successor in the Free School, Mr. Edmund Chard, was not a family man, therefore the young widow was permitted to remain in the schoolhouse for the time being. The school faces Pile Street, from which it is divided by a courtyard; the schoolmaster's house, at the back of it, being approached through the school, as well as by a passage leading through a little garden and across a small paved yard in the rear. Over the front door is inscribed, "This house was erected by Giles Malpas, of St. Thomas Parish, Gent., for the use of the Master of this School, A.D. 1749." It has two small rooms on the ground floor, that to the right having been used as a kitchen, and that on the left as a sitting-room, and two bedrooms upon the upper story, that to the left being pointed out as the room in which the poet was born.

On the 20th of November, 1752, a little more than

CHATTERTON'S BIRTHPLACE, PILE STREET SCHOOL.

From a photograph by C. S. Wills.

To face p. 28.

three months after his father's death, a boy was born unto Mrs. Chatterton, and in affectionate memory of the husband who had not lived to behold his child, she named it Thomas. On the 1st of January, 1753, the boy was baptized at the church of St. Mary Redcliff, to the enduring fame of which beautiful edifice he subsequently contributed so greatly by his writings.

In 1757 Mr. Chard, having retired from the mastership of the Free School, was succeeded by a Mr. Love, who being a family man required the use of the adjoining dwelling, so poor Mrs. Chatterton had to turn out. The young widow removed to a house opposite the Upper Gate, Redcliff Hill, and amongst her belongings took with her such of the old parchments, of which mention has been made, as still remained in her possession.

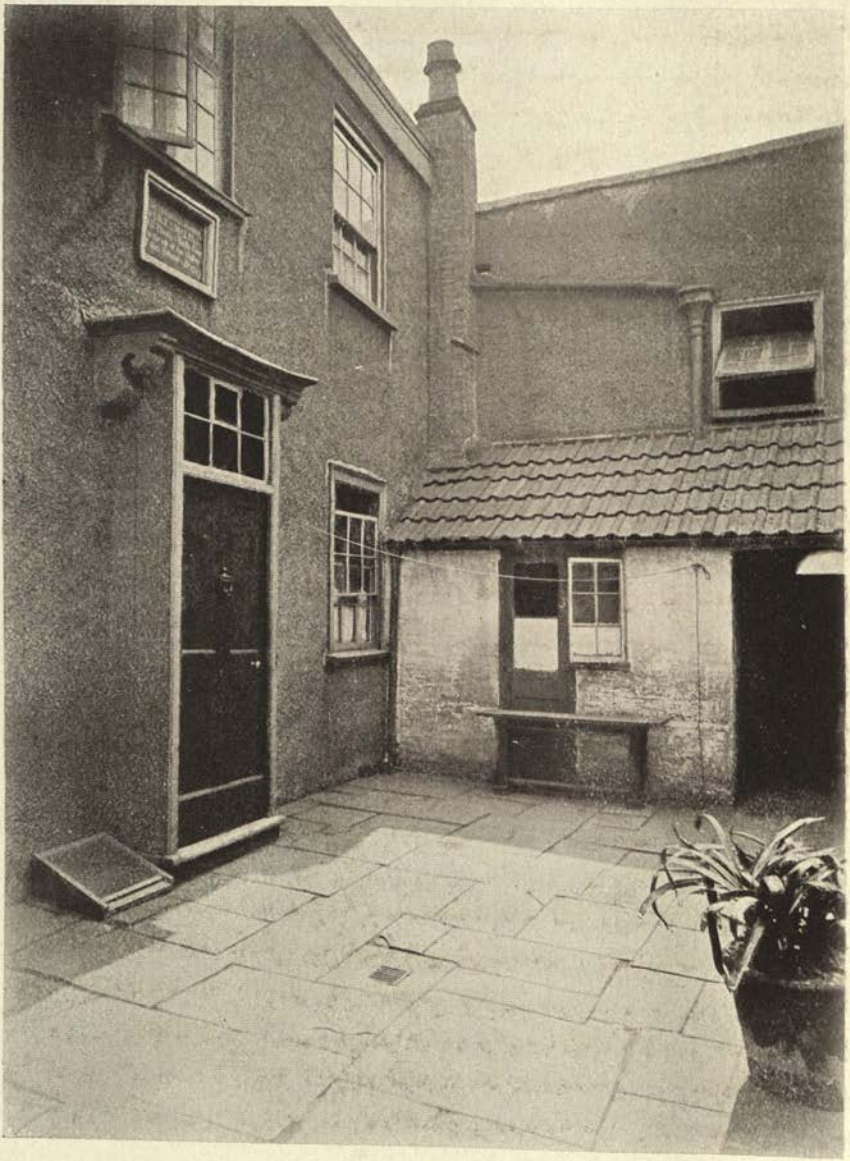
Those persons who could no better comprehend the sterling qualities of Mrs. Chatterton than they would the genius of her son, described the widow as possessing "no shining abilities," yet she had a fair share of educational qualifications for the times she lived in—times when duchesses wrote and talked ungrammatically, and when even professors of learned societies did not understand their own language. She was not only a good-hearted woman, with domestic qualities of a high order, but had a strong love for her kindred and worked nobly for their welfare. By her personal labour she maintained herself and her two children respectably, and for several years supported her deceased husband's mother; therefore, it is not claiming too much to credit her with some

ability, notwithstanding the opinion of her son's biographers to the contrary.

When the whole burden of the family fell upon her, Mrs. Chatterton faced the world bravely. She started a school for children and took in needlework. She drew patterns on muslin in indigo, for ladies of the neighbourhood to work to, and is reported to have been very clever at this employment. She must have been not only industrious, but possessed of some artistic skill. Her pupils spoke well of her, describing her as "kind and motherly," but as subject to occasional flashes of passion soon over. The sorely-tried young widow had much to render her short-tempered; yet she not only bore her trials courageously but, as will be seen, manifested good sense in many ways. A niece spoke of her as "one of the best of women."

On entering the world Thomas Chatterton was heavily handicapped for life's race. A fatherless boy, son of a young, struggling, poverty-bound widow, he needed exceptional qualities of temperament, or fortunate opportunities, to carry him through the world with any degree of success.

Although the boy's earliest days may have been similar to those of most infants of his lowly position in life, from what is known of his mother's disposition he must have been better cared for than were many children of the poor in those times. Various anecdotes are related of his childhood, but as they are chiefly derived from tainted testimony it is better to ignore them. The evidence of his sister, who, being more than three years older than Thomas, was



PILE STREET SCHOOL.

From a photograph by C. S. Wills.

To face p. 31.

enabled to judge his disposition, as well as assist his mother to educate him, is the most valuable if not the only trustworthy information procurable of his most youthful days. In a letter answering the inquiries of Sir Herbert Croft, she states, "My brother was dull at learning, not knowing many letters at four years old, and always objected to read in a small book."

When five years old the child was sent to the Pile Street school, where his father had formerly taught, but the new master, Mr. Stephen Love, who had succeeded Mr. Chard upon the latter's resignation, failed to find any capacity for learning in his pupil and returned him to the mother as a confirmed dullard. Like many another lad in whom genius was dormant, his mind could not germinate in the restricted confines of a child's charity school. The poor overworked mother had to take the boy's education in hand herself and taught him the alphabet from an old folio music-book which had belonged to his father. Mrs. Chatterton was tearing up the book for waste-paper when the large illuminated capitals at the beginning of the verses captured the boy's fancy, or, according to his mother's suggestive words, "he fell in love with them."

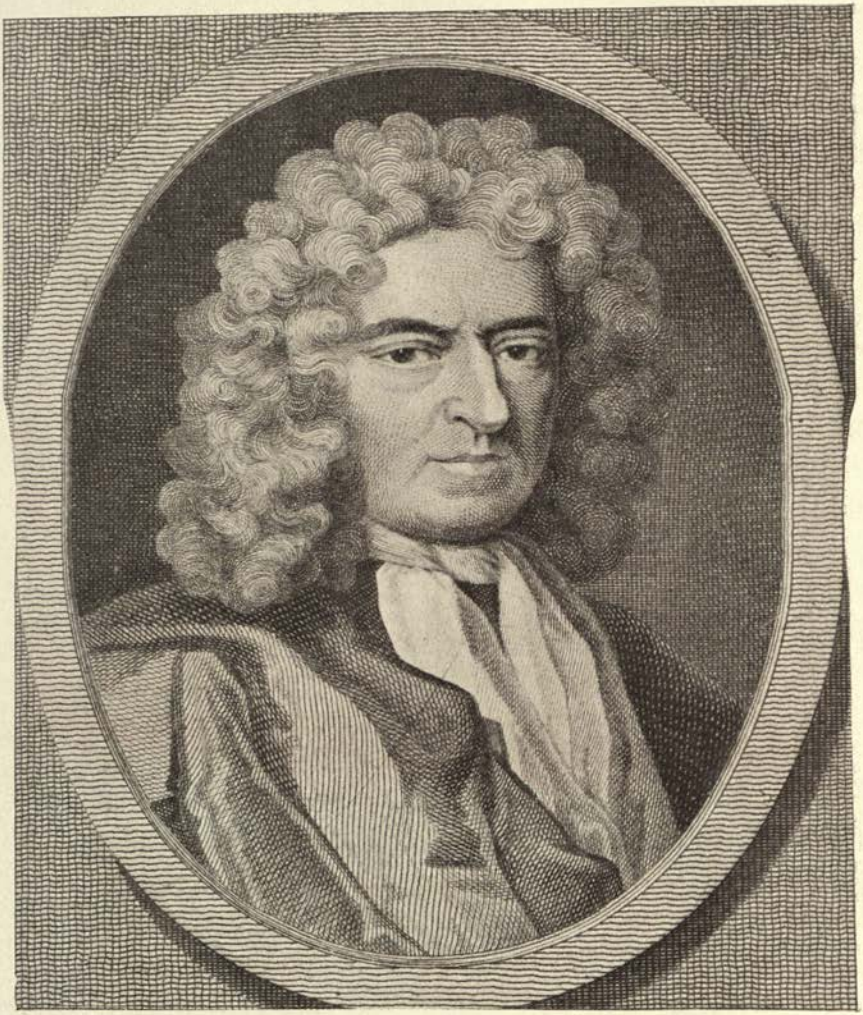
From the alphabet his mother proceeded to teach him to read, using for that purpose an old black-letter Bible, so that his earliest lessons prepared the way for instilling into his mind a knowledge of mediæval lore. Under the care of his mother and sister the lad now made good progress in his studies, giving himself up so eagerly to reading as to cause anxiety lest he should injure himself by it. He would read from

early morning until bedtime, so continuously that the fear was no longer that he would become an inveterate dunce, but that his health might suffer through excessive study.

A distinguishing feature of the boy's childhood, as recorded by his sister, was "a thirst for pre-eminence. Before he was five years old he would always preside over his playmates as their master, and they his hired servants." An anecdote characteristic of this "vaulting ambition," as related by the same authority, is to the effect that when a manufacturer was promising Mrs. Chatterton's children a present of earthenware, he asked the boy what device he would like painted upon his, and the child answered, "Paint me an angel with wings and a trumpet, to trumpet my name over the world." Thus early was not only a knowledge of Fame, but a longing for it, developed in the boy's mind.

Furthermore, in her most interesting reminiscences his sister states, "I recollect nothing more remarkable till he went into the school, which was in his eighth year; excepting his promising my mother and me a deal of finery, when he grew up, as a reward of her care."

The school thus referred to by the sister was that known as Colston's Hospital, the "Blue Coat School" of Bristol.



EDWARD COLSTON.

From engraving after portait by J. Richardson.

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## CHAPTER III

### SCHOOL DAYS

COLSTON'S HOSPITAL, at Bristol, was founded in 1708 by Edward Colston, one of England's merchant princes. Having amassed a large fortune by commerce, Colston spent it magnificently in providing charitable institutions for his native land. Amongst other philanthropical schemes he proposed to establish at Bristol a scholastic residence for boys, after the model of Christ's Hospital, London, popularly known as the "Blue Coat School," to which place he had received his own education. Bristol boys to the number of one hundred were to be maintained and instructed, clothed and fed in style similar to those of the metropolitan foundation.

Unfortunately, Edward Colston, notwithstanding his benevolent intentions, was a man of a most rigid type of creed, and of restricted views as regards instruction of the masses. Instead of providing for his "Blue Coat School" the educational advantages of its London prototype, he bound the management to supply only instruction of the most elementary description, and compelled his representatives by inflexible rules to exclude from the precincts of

the school every form of dissent from the Church of England as by law established. He stipulated that the secular education of the boys should be restricted to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and that they should be trained in the principles of religion as inculcated by the Church of England Catechism.

As a home for these one hundred scholars Colston purchased a fine old building on St. Augustine's Back, Bristol, known as "The Great House," erected on a site formerly occupied by a monastery of Friars Carmelite, and had it suitably equipped for boarding and educating them. Unlike the London Blue Coat School, however, Colston appears to have provided but few advantages for the studious, evidently not deeming it possible that children selected from the poorer classes could or, perhaps, should acquire such positions in society as would justify a higher degree of education. Eventually several of them did do well in commercial and other pursuits, when the ground-work they had obtained at Colston's Hospital stood them in good stead. No advanced classical or mathematical subjects were to be taught there, and no generous scholarships were to be provided for them at the Universities, nor was anything to be done to make the school a fostering home of talent, ability, or genius. The teaching was rudimentary, being, as stated, confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic; yet under the guidance of liberal-minded masters some higher training would appear to have been provided, judging by the results in the case of some of the boys.

On the recommendation of the Rev. John Gardiner,

Vicar of Henbury, a nomination to Colston's was procured for Chatterton by the Rev. Thomas Harris, master of the Redcliff Grammar School, and on the 3rd of August, 1760, when wanting rather more than three months to complete his eighth year, the lad was admitted on the foundation. It has been frequently stated that Chatterton was admitted as Thomas "Chadderton," but all the school registers give the name as now spelt; whilst his nominator was a clergyman, as stated above, and not Mr. Harris, the Mayor of Bristol, as suggested by his biographer, Professor Wilson.

The lad had been looking forward with joyful anticipations to school life, deeming he would now have unstinted opportunities for reading, which hitherto had been his life's chief occupation, varied only by rambles in and about St. Mary Redcliff Church and its precincts. His disappointment was intense. The rules of the institution were strict and had to be strictly adhered to. The hours for schooling were in summer from 7 a.m. till noon and from 1 p.m. till 5 p.m., and in winter from 8 a.m. till noon, and from 1 p.m. till 4 p.m. The boys had to be in bed every evening by eight o'clock all through the year, and were only allowed to be absent from the school on Saturdays and Saints' Days, and then only from one or two in the afternoon till seven or eight in the evening, according to the season. They were never allowed out on Sundays, that day being passed in religious exercises, public and private. No other holidays were allowed.

In accordance with the founder's rules the boys

were provided with board, residence, and education, to the limits already specified, and with clothing; this last being copied from the Tudor costume worn by the boys of Christ's Hospital, London. In addition to the dark-blue gown, yellow stockings, and leather belt worn by scholars in the metropolitan institution, each boy wore a metal plate on his breast, having the founder's crest of a dolphin on it, and each had his hair cut in imitation of the monkish tonsure. In addition to education and maintenance, each boy on leaving the school, at the expiration of his course, was to be apprenticed or placed in some respectable trade or occupation, and his premium was to be paid out of money provided by the founder for that purpose.

For many boys in poor positions all these rules and endowments might have been, and were, of great value, but for lads of any aspiration or ambitition Colston's could scarcely be deemed a suitable training-ground; for one of abnormal temperament like Chatterton, who could not be bound by any environment, the place seemed utterly unfit. All his previous ideas of a continual supply of "learning's golden gifts" must have been speedily dissipated at the Hospital. Hitherto he had lived in the unrestricted freedom of home life, spending every available moment in reading everything readable he came across, or roaming in and about the wonders of St. Mary Redcliff, gazing on its architectural beauties, or marvelling over the strange embellishments of its monuments and tombs.

For a time everything at the school wore a look

of novelty, and the unwonted strangeness of his surroundings would have interest for the precocious child, but as he became more accustomed to the place, discovered the restricted nature of his lessons, and felt the restraint upon his personal liberty, and the curb upon his words and actions, the change must have been hard to bear. But Chatterton was not one to shirk work or neglect opportunities; he applied himself diligently to such studies as were open to him, so that the assistant master was able to inform his mother that the boy had made rapid progress in arithmetic, and that he could always be depended upon for his veracity; whilst the Head Master, Mr. Haynes, became his friend and conceived a strong affection for him. It has been alleged, and the allegation has been repeated by one biographer after the other, that the Head Master, a "Mr. Warner," had cause to be dissatisfied with the boy's conduct, both during his residence at Colston's and after he had left there, but the story is the invention of one who had an object in blackening Chatterton's character. It has been proved that there never was a master named "Warner" at Colston's, and that Mr. William Haynes, appointed Head Master in 1762, held that position during the whole time Chatterton was in the school, therefore the narrative, like so many of the tales told to the lad's discredit, is entirely fictitious.

On Saturday half-holidays and Saints' Days the boy was free to visit his much-loved mother and sister and to discuss with his prematurity of mind and manner all the events of the day, or, with in-

creased rather than diminished ardour, to revisit his favourite St. Mary's and admire again and again its beauties, pondering over the entombed worthies there until their names and deeds, imaginary or otherwise, made them more familiar and real to him than were the commonplace folks amidst whom he lived.

Chatterton's schoolmates must have regarded him as a strange boy, for they found occasion to inform his mother that he spent all his playtime in reading. And what strange reading it was for any child save Chatterton. Soon after his eleventh year he made a catalogue of the books he had read to the number of seventy, and it was seen that history and divinity were the chief subjects of his studies, if studies they should be styled. It was not that he was restricted to such a class of works, for he was wont to obtain books for reading from local circulating libraries, paying for the loan of them with the allowance his mother made him for pocket-money, so that he could procure any works he desired. When Chatterton was about ten years old, if Mr. Tyson's calculations be correct, he was confirmed by the Bishop, and attracted attention by the serious answers and appropriate remarks he made upon the occasion. It was not long after this that he was appointed doorkeeper in his turn at the school, and during the week of comparative leisure this gave him he made some verses on the Lord's Day, and paraphrased the ninth chapter of Job and some chapters of Isaiah. Evidently these were his first attempts at verse, for his sister makes this highly suggestive remark in con-

COLSTON'S SCHOOL.

From water-colour picture of Colston's School. By permission of Dr. Anthony Finn, Headmaster of Colston's School.

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nection with them: "He had been gloomy from the time he began to learn, and we remarked he was more cheerful after he began to write poetry." Naturally there is nothing of value in the boyish lines referred to, they being only the reflection of the theological phrasings he was having dinned into his ears daily, but they are useful as evidence of his early ability to versify, and it is interesting to learn that the boy thought so well of his verses that he took some of them to *Felix Farley's Journal*, where they appeared on January 8, 1763, when their author was little over ten years old. It may well be imagined that he, as also his dear ones at home, was delighted at this earliest acknowledgment of his budding talent.

Henceforth the boy began to versify continually, at first on religious themes, but subsequently he indulged in satirical pieces, specimens of both kinds appearing in the columns of *Felix Farley's Journal*. "A Hymn for Christmas Day" was written in one of those little pocket-books Chatterton constantly used for jotting down his verses in. So juvenile a production as this "Hymn" is cannot be expected to exhibit any marked originality of thought or treatment, yet it displays a wonderful gift of language for one so young. Some stanzas may be quoted:—

Almighty Framer of the skies!
O let our pure devotion rise,
  Like incense in Thy sight!
Wrapt in impenetrable shade
The texture of our souls was made
  Till Thy command gave light.

. . . . .

How shall we celebrate the day,
When God appeared in mortal clay,
The mark of worldly scorn;
When the archangel's heavenly lays
Attempted the Redeemer's praise,
And hailed Salvation's morn!

. . . . .

How shall we celebrate His name,
Who groaned beneath a life of shame,
In all afflictions tried!
The soul is raptured to conceive
A truth, which Being must believe,
The God Eternal died.

My soul, exert thy powers, adore;
Upon devotion's plumage soar
To celebrate the day:
The God from whom creation sprung
Shall animate my grateful tongue;
From Him I'll catch the lay!

In the same little pocket-book in which the above verses appeared are recorded Chatterton's first known sarcastic lines, called "Sly Dick." As the first of his efforts in that manner and as the production of a lad, one might say of a child, of only eleven years old, the piece deserves preservation. It is also interesting from the fact that in this production the boy is seen to have already begun to make use of a few antique and quaint words:—

Sharp was the frost, the wind was high,
And sparkling stars bedecked the sky,
Sly Dick, in arts of cunning skilled,
Whose rapine all his pockets filled,
Had laid him down to take his rest
And soothe with sleep his anxious breast.

'Twas thus a dark infernal sprite,
A native of the blackest night,
Portending mischief to devise,
Upon Sly Dick he cast his eyes;
Then straight descends th' infernal sprite
And in his chamber does alight.

* * * * *

Thus spake the sprite: "Hearken, my friend,
And to my counsels now attend.
Within the garret's spacious dome,
There lies a well-stored wealthy room,
Well stored with cloth and stockings too,
Which I suppose will do for you;
First from the cloth take thou a purse,
For thee it will not be the worse;
A nobler purse rewards thy pains,
A purse to hold thy filching gains;
Then, from the stockings, let them reeve,
And not a scrap behind thee leave,
Five bundles for a penny sell,
And pence to thee will come pell-mell."

* * * * *

When in the morn, with thoughts erect,
Sly Dick did on his dream reflect,
"Why faith," thinks he, "'tis something too,
It might—perhaps—it might—be true,
I'll go and see." Away he hies,
And to the garret quick he flies,
Enters the room, cuts up the clothes,
And after that reeves up the hose:
Then of the cloth he purses made,
Purses to hold his filching trade.

* * * * *

Apparently Sly Dick was not a real personage, but only the offspring of the child's fantasy.

Another piece written when Chatterton was still about eleven, published in *Farley's Journal* for

January 7, 1764, shows a distinct advance upon the former productions. "The Churchwarden and the Apparition; a Fable," although of no value as a poem, whatever its writer's age might be, displays more command of language and style than the previous compositions. It refers to the actions of a real person, the "Joe" of the lines having been identified as Joseph Thomas, the churchwarden of St. Mary Redcliff. This man had become the object of various sarcastic attacks in the Bristol journals, in consequence of having been accused, rightly or wrongly, of having had the graves around St. Mary's levelled, and the clay carted away for the purposes of his trade as a brickmaker. The lines by Chatterton would seem to imply that this man was also deemed responsible for the removal from the churchyard of the ancient cross, described in the fifteenth century by William of Worcester as a "most beautiful cross of curious workmanship." Doubtless the lad had heard much from his seniors about Joe's depredations, and regarded all injury to anything connected with his beloved building and its surroundings not only as sacrilege, but almost as a personal wrong.

Another attack on this Thomas in *Farley's Journal* was a letter, the authorship of which on slender evidence has been claimed for Chatterton. Mr. J. Latimer, in his "Annals of Bristol," attributes it to Thomas Phillips, but gives no reason for so doing. The signature to this document, if not by the future author of "The Bristowe Tragedie," was certainly read, noted, and remembered by him for use when required. The letter reads :—

MR. PRINTER,—Being *old* and having enjoyed my place many a long year, I have buried or rather dug the graves for one half of our parish; and could tell, to an inch, *where* and *how* their bodies lie, and are ranged underground;—and by this my skill am always consulted by my master, the sexton, where such and such a family are interred, and have never failed of giving great satisfaction in the discharge of my office. But alas! I am like to be robbed at once, of all my knowledge, procured at the expense of so many years' close study and application to business: for you must know, my HEAD MASTER, a great projector, has taken it into his head to level the churchyard; and by digging and throwing about his *clay* there, and defacing the stones, makes such confusion among the *dead*, and will so puzzle me, if he goes on, that no man *living* will be able to find where to lay them properly and then he may dig the graves himself; for I foresee, I shall get the ill-will of the parish about it: for *even the poor love to bury with their kindred*: and all's but right that they should. I should be glad, therefore, to know the sense of the public, whether any body has a just right, or needful call to dig in the churchyard, besides FULLFORD, *the Gravedigger*.

PS.—As I intend dropping the business of grave-digger, now rendered so very troublesome, I propose renting my old spot of ground (the churchyard) when the green turf is all removed, and for *decency's* sake will prevent the *naked* appearance of it, by planting potatoes, raising some fine beds of onions, &c., as the mould is fat and good. And I see no reason why I may not get a *profitable job* out of the church, as well as my GREAT MASTER, —as I find that's the game now-a-days, tho' decency, convenience, or the like, be the pretence.

FULLFORD, *the Gravedigger*.

When Chatterton was a few months over eleven—that is to say, on April 14, 1764—he scribbled down in his pocket-book some lines he called "Apostate Will." This apostate was apparently another real personage, who had incurred the boy's contempt by using religion as a stepping-stone to promotion in

worldly affairs. The following representative lines may be quoted from this juvenile production :—

In days of old, when Wesley's power
Gathered new strength by every hour ;
Apostate Will, just sunk in trade,
Resolved his bargain should be made ;
Then straight to Wesley he repairs,
And puts on grave and solemn airs.

. . . . .

The preacher then instructions gave,
How he in this world should behave.
He hears, assents, and gives a nod,
Says every word's the word of God.
Then lifting his dissembling eyes,
"How blessed is the sect!" he cries ;
"Nor Bingham, Young, nor Stillingfleet,
Shall make me from this sect retreat."
He then his circumstance declared,
How hardly with him matters fared,
Begged him next morning for to make
A small collection for his sake.
The preacher said, "Do not repine,
The whole collection shall be thine."

. . . . .

His outward acts were grave and prim,
The Methodist appeared in him.

. . . . .

He was a preacher and what not,
As long as money could be got,
He'd oft profess, with holy fire,
"The labourer's worthy of his hire."

. . . . .

A noble place appeared in view,
Then—to the Methodists, adieu !

. . . . .

Then to the curate straight he ran,
And thus addressed the reverend man :

"I was a Methodist, 'tis true,
With penitence I turn to you.
O that it were your bounteous will,
That I the vacant place might fill!
With justice I'd myself acquit,
Do everything that's right and fit!"
The curate straightway gave consent.
To take the place he quickly went.
Accordingly he took the place,
And keeps it with dissembled grace.

. . . . . .

Even for a lad little over eleven these lines are not wonderful as regards workmanship, but for insight into character they are strangely premature, although the overpowering influence of his Church of England training will account for the confident reference to "Bingham, Young, nor Stillingfleet," whose works were doubtless amongst those books of divinity he had studied.

A most interesting question in the life of Chatterton is what impulse first directed his thoughts towards the composition of poetry, or, at any rate, impelled him towards versification. Fortunately for our legitimate curiosity, the cause is easy to discover. Already it has been pointed out that the lad was a favourite of and much liked by the Head Master of the school, Mr. Haynes, who had been a Colston boy himself, and it is another point in Chatterton's favour that he was the intimate associate and friend of his junior master, Thomas Phillips. He was on the most affectionate terms with this beloved master, whose influence on several of the scholars at Colston's, where Phillips himself had been educated, was very

powerful. Little is known of Phillips, but that little serves to make him the most interesting of all Chatterton's youthful companions and, probably, the only one of whom more would gladly be learnt. Many a reader of Chatterton's life will echo the wish of his first biographer, Dr. Gregory, that a fuller account of this early friend of the poet were available. It has been noticed that despite the limited range of the education afforded him at Colston's, where Phillips had been admitted on December 14, 1758, and where he had been apprenticed to the Head Master, Mr. Haynes, on April 20, 1765, he not only attained to an assistant mastership in the school, but acquired a taste for history and poetry, and even inspired several of the lads in his charge with kindred inclinations. In such circumstances it is scarcely far-fetched to believe that Mr. Haynes himself must have been the primary source of this enthusiasm for literary attainments amongst the scholars at Colston's.

Mrs. Newton, in her reminiscences of her brother, is careful to record that his "intimates in the schools were but few and they solid lads," but she does not refer to his friendship with Phillips, although Chatterton himself has left in elegiac lines an expression of his deep admiration and affection for this tutor and friend. It has been suggested, with much probability, although there is no evidence adducible on the point, that this assistant master, Phillips, was related to the poet, who had an uncle and cousins of that surname, one of whom, Stephen Chatterton Phillips, was a scholar at Colston's Hospital from August, 1794, to October, 1800.

Phillips was regarded by the elder boys at Colston's with much admiration, not only for his personal kindness, but as author of verses which had appeared in *Farley's Journal* and other local publications. His example aroused the lads' emulation; several of whom attempted to follow in his footsteps and make an appearance in print. Some of them, such as Cary, Fowler, and others, are known to have so far succeeded as to have acquired a certain amount of local notoriety in literature, but Chatterton appears to have kept aloof from the petty versifyings of this band of poetlings, and to have dwelt apart within his own ideal world. With his habitual sensitiveness he seems to have maintained such silence about his own doings in authorcraft, that James Thistlethwaite, an intimate companion of his during three or more of the years he passed at Colston's, would not believe, all positive evidence notwithstanding, that the poet had "attempted the composition of a single couplet during" that period; that is to say, when other pupils of Phillips were priding themselves on the occasional appearance of their lines in "the Poets' Column" of local journals.

The connection of Phillips with Colston's is supposed to have ceased soon after Chatterton left the school, because he is discovered at the time of his decease, which must have been by or before October, 1769, to have been residing at Fairford, Gloucestershire, whence both he and Mr. Haynes came. As there is an interval of two years between the dates of Chatterton leaving the school and the death of Phillips, the suggestion seems of little value.

It will be noticed in the course of this narrative that although most of Chatterton's companions considered him, who was everything to everybody, a pleasant acquaintance, none of them ever understood him, unless Phillips may be excepted, and as Professor Wilson has pointed out, "the letters of Thistlethwaite, Cary, Smith, and Rudhall and the narratives of Catcott, Barrett, and other seniors alike betray the feeling that the boy was 'no such great things after all.' But when learned antiquarians, deans, baronets, and professors began to ply them with inquiries about their past intercourse with him, their self-importance was gratified and informants became minute and precise about facts and dates, which have since been too implicitly accepted as authentic." It is, indeed, far more than Professor Wilson comprehended, the acceptance of these uncorroborated statements without due scrutiny, made by companions and pretended associates of Chatterton, that has hitherto mystified and confused all deeds and dates connected with the boy-poet's career. None has suffered more from these misstatements than Wilson himself.

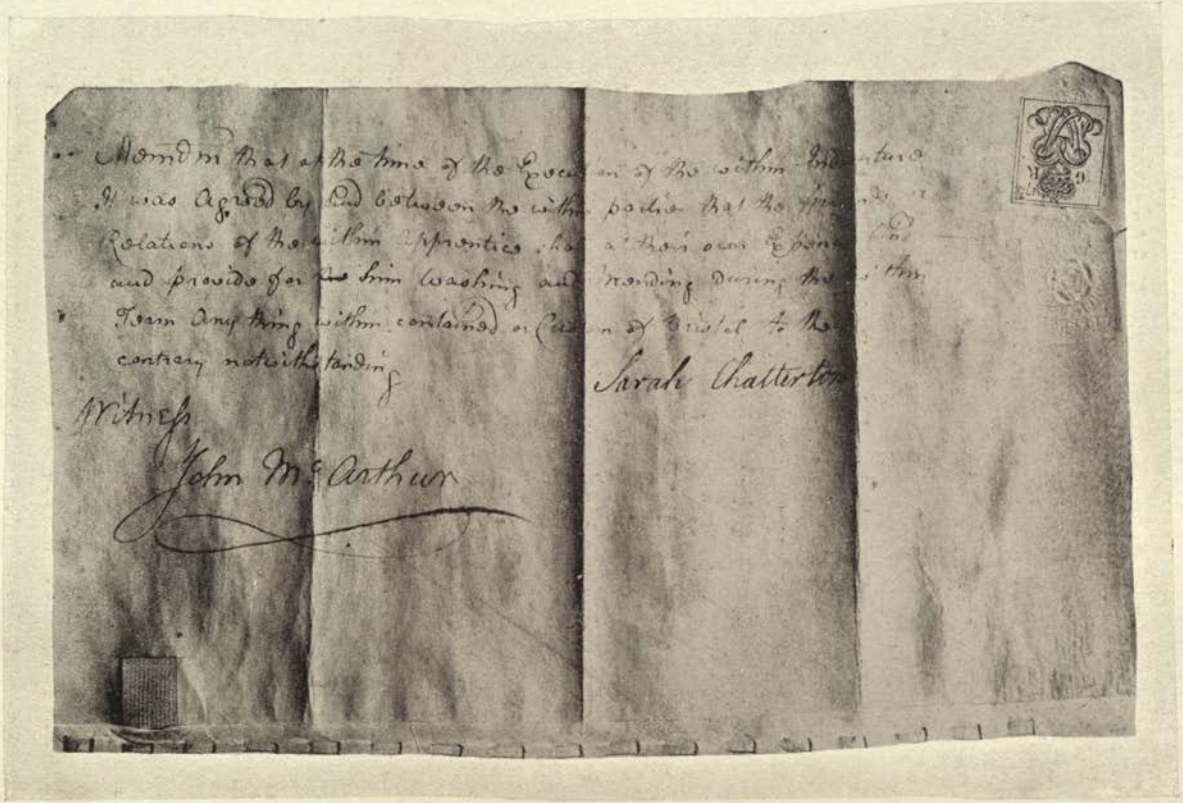
In her reminiscences of her brother Mrs. Newton makes special reference to another schoolfellow of Chatterton who, if he did not arouse such feelings of respect and admiration in the boy's heart and mind as did the eulogised Phillips, was at any rate a close and intimate friend of the young poet and knew much about his poetic productions. Baker was one of Chatterton's dearest associates, and familiar with the secrets of his heart and brain, but was not

the friend referred to. It has been averred and adopted as fact in the biographies of Chatterton that Baker was his bedfellow at Colston's, where the lads slept two in a bed, but as research proves that there was no boy named Baker at the school during the period the poet was there, the statement is incorrect.

Apparently, Chatterton's bedfellow was Thomas Cary, called his "second self," who entered the school on March 11, 1760, and did not leave it until September 30, 1766, so that the two boys were there together nearly the whole of their schooltime. Boys who were in such close proximity, night after night for years, could not but sympathise with one another in some measure. Whether it was due to chance or, as is more probable, to their own desire, that boys became such close companions, they could scarcely avoid sharing each other's joys, sorrows, and aspirations. Chatterton's association with Cary must have been fortunate, for the two were attached to each other, had somewhat kindred studies, and after they left Colston's school remained upon affectionate terms. It would have been a great hardship and almost past endurance for lads of opposite temperaments or, what was worse, of unfriendly associations to be obliged to spend so many hours of their time in bed together. Summer and winter, throughout the year, without distinction as to age, boys at Colston's were compelled by the rules of the place to retire to rest at eight o'clock, thus having to spend nearly half their time in bed! It would be impossible to sleep through all those hours, and therefore a very great part of a boy's happiness in the

school must have depended upon his feelings towards his companion. In that one respect Chatterton seems to have been fortunate, and, coupled with other circumstances, his school life does not appear to have been unhappy.

Whilst at Colston's Chatterton does not seem to have had difficulty in obtaining books for persual. He was able to procure the works of the chief poets, including Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, for reading and study. He borrowed books from various persons, particularly from a Mr. Green, who is said to have had the largest collection of any bookseller in Bristol. He obtained from him Speght's edition of Chaucer, and it can be well imagined how he lingered lovingly over its enchanted pages, enthusiastically imbibing the spirit of his ancient predecessor's mediæval lore. It is recorded upon the somewhat doubtful authority of W. H. Ireland, forger of the pseudo-Shakespearean MSS., that one of these Bristol booksellers, knowing Chatterton's family and, apparently, struck by his love of study, would allow him to borrow books, and make transcripts from them, *on credit*, when his cash was low or exhausted.



SIGNATURE OF CHATTERTON'S MOTHER.

From Chatterton's indentures, by permission of the Bristol Art Gallery Committee.

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# CHAPTER IV

## APPRENTICESHIP

CHATTERTON left Colston's Hospital, where the previous seven years of his life had been spent, on July 1, 1767, and on the same day entered the office of Mr. John Lambert, scrivener. He was apprenticed to this man by the school authorities, who paid a fee of ten pounds for him out of the fund left by Mr. Colston for the purpose of apprenticing scholars of the institution upon completing their term there. The Indenture, now preserved in the Bristol Museum, witnesseth that

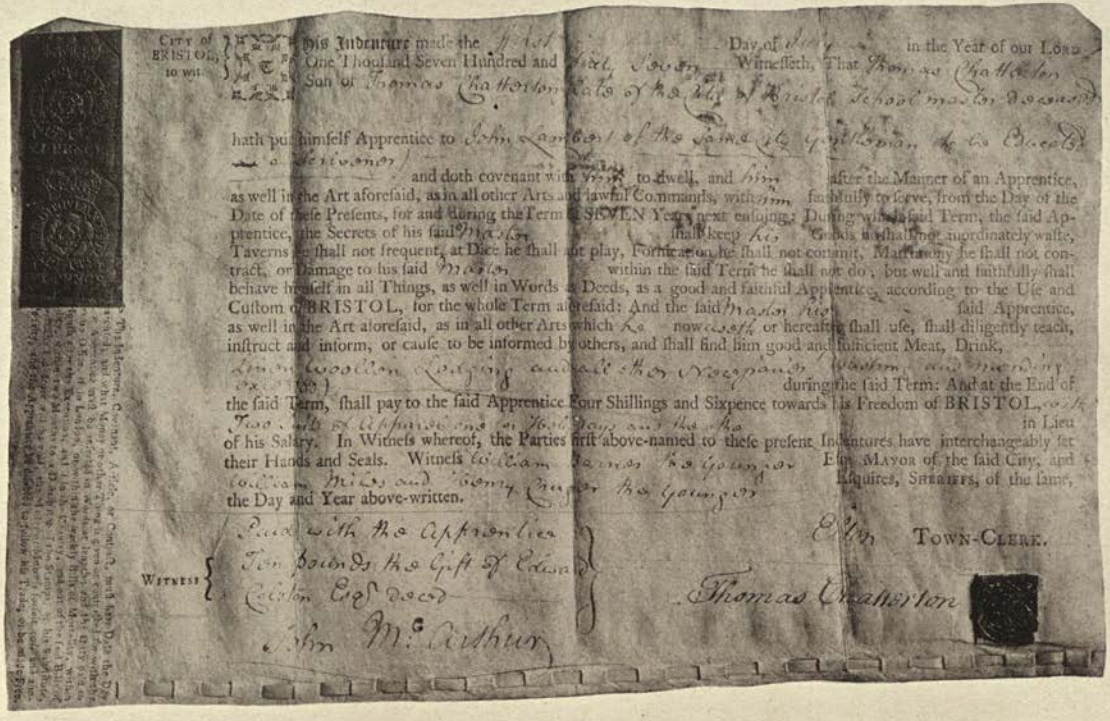
Thomas Chatterton, son of Thomas Chatterton, late of the City of Bristol, Schoolmaster, deceased,—hath put himself Apprentice to John Lambert, of the same city, gentleman, to be educated a Scrivener, and doth covenant with him to dwell, and him after the Manner of an Apprentice, as well as the Art aforesaid, as in all other Arts and lawful Commands, with him faithfully to serve from the Day of the Date of these Presents, for and during the Term of Seven Years next ensuing: During which said Term, the said Apprentice, the Secrets of his said Master shall keep, his Goods he shall not inordinately waste, Taverns he shall not frequent, at Dice he shall not play, . . . Matrimony he shall not contract, or damage to his said Master within the said Term he shall not do; but well and faithfully shall behave himself in all things, as well in Words as Deeds, as a good and faithful Apprentice, according to the Use and Custom

of Bristol, for the whole Term aforesaid, and the said Master his said Apprentice as well in the Art aforesaid as in all other Arts which he now useth or hereafter shall use, shall diligently teach, instruct and inform, or cause to be informed by others, and shall find him good and sufficient Meat, Drink, Linen, Woollen, Lodging and all other Necessaries, Washing and Mending excepted, during the said Term. And at the end of the said Term shall pay to the said Apprentice Four Shillings and Sixpence towards his Freedom of Bristol with Two suits of Apparel, one for Holydays and the other in lieu of his Salary.

The Mayor and Sheriffs of the City were witnesses to this agreement, to which the Town Clerk appended his signature, as did also Chatterton, in a clear and already well formed, distinctive handwriting.

A memorandum was appended to this Indenture setting forth that " It was agreed by and between the within parties that the Friends or Relatives of the within Apprentice shall at their own Expense find and provide for him Washing and Mending during the within Term anything within contained or Custom of Bristol to the contrary notwithstanding," and this proviso Mrs. Chatterton signed in her usual remarkably firm and clear handwriting, a writing which much resembled her son's.

The lad must have gained a good character for behaviour and education at Colston's, otherwise it would scarcely have been possible for him to have been placed in a situation, apparently so desirable for a poor charity boy, as was the scrivener's, and the school trustees must have satisfied themselves that Mr. John Lambert was a member of the Church of England and in all worldly respects a suitable personage for the management of their scholar, otherwise



SIGNATURE OF CHATTERTON WHEN A BOY.

From his indentures, by permission of the Bristol Art Gallery Committee.

To face p. 53.

they would have failed to comply with the terms of Colston's Trust, which, dating from the year 1717, enjoined them to "take effectual care as far as in them lieth, that the boys be bred up in the doctrine of our present established Church of England, and that none of them be afterwards placed out as apprentices to any men that be dissenters from the said Communion, as they will be answerable for a breach of their trust at the last and great tribunal before which we must all appear."

At that time Lambert's office was in Small Street, some distance from his private residence, where his new apprentice had to sleep and return to daily for his mid-day meal. He had to be at the office by eight in the morning, go back to Lambert's for dinner, and then return to the office till eight in the evening, when he was free for two hours. As soon as he left the office Chatterton would hurry home to his mother and stay with her during the evening, leaving in time to be back at his master's by ten. Despite the dislike Lambert grew to entertain for his apprentice, he was obliged to acknowledge that the lad was invariably regular and punctual in his attendance, and only once during the whole period of his servitude exceeded his stipulated time for returning, and then he had obtained special permission to spend the evening, it being Christmas, with his mother, who was entertaining some friends.

During the day Chatterton's official duties were slight, consisting chiefly of copying precedents. That he did not neglect this work several hundred of closely written folio pages in his handwriting are still pre-

served as evidence. Lambert was young, being only twenty-eight at this time, a wealthy man, not overburdened with business, and in taking an apprentice, in the way he did, saved himself the expense of a clerk. According to Mrs. Newton's account, Chatterton had little of his master's work to do, "sometimes not two hours in a day," so that he had plenty of leisure for the pursuit of a more congenial occupation. True there were no Saturdays and Saints' Days now for the lad: no holidays of any description, save the two hours in the evening between office work and the master's house, but into those two hours much happiness might be compressed. The lad was devotedly attached to his relatives, and his sister states, "We saw him most evenings before nine, and he would in general stay to the limits of his time. He was seldom two evenings together without seeing us."

The friends of Lambert declare that he was a good-natured man, who was greatly annoyed about Chatterton, whom he regarded as a sullen-tempered lad. He honestly confessed that he never knew his apprentice to keep bad company, as others had suggested he did, and he seems never even to have suspected him of any inclination that way. Probably the well-to-do solicitor was too interested in his own well-being, and too confident in the respectability of every one engaged in his employ, to consider any such dereliction possible in any member of his household. To be certain that his apprentice did not desert his post during office hours the footman and other servants were often sent round to inspect, and

they had always to report that they found the lad there and hard at work. Naturally, neither the footman nor the other servants were judges of the work going on and would not know whether Chatterton was writing verse or occupied with usual office routine.

The poet was greatly troubled at having to take his meals with the servants, who probably did not appreciate his company any more than he did theirs, and, still worse infliction for the poet, he had to sleep with the footboy. Not only would the proud spirit of his race blaze up at these seeming indignities, but the presence of the footboy in his bedchamber must have been a serious inconvenience to one who had reached a climax in his career when solitude was an essential factor in his poetic plans. So full of irrepressible energy and indefatigable zeal was Chatterton now that the many hours he had at the office for carrying on his poetic labours did not suffice for his requirements, and he is stated by his sister to have frequently sat up the whole night writing, especially towards the full of the moon, when he believed he could compose better. These nocturnal labours appear to have been carried on till the close of his short life, judging by the statements of those he had to associate with at bedtime. It is scarcely to be wondered at that with the irritating espionage in the daytime and unpleasant sleeping arrangements; the undesirable companions at meal time; want of holidays and of salary, Lambert found his apprentice of a "sullen and gloomy temper, which particularly displayed itself among the servants." In after times the scrivener honestly gave the lad a good character,

and Chatterton, who owned that as an apprentice none had greater liberties than he had, forbore satirising his employer when nearly everybody else he associated with came under his flagellatory pen.

Not long after Chatterton entered Lambert's service, the scrivener removed his office to 37, Corn Street, just opposite the Bristol Exchange. To some extent this removal must have been agreeable for the too much isolated lad, as it brought him into contact with several young fellows of about his own age. Some of these lads were apprentices in or near the building he was now working in; with one or two of them he was already acquainted, and with others he speedily got on friendly terms. Occasionally these young fellows held a symposium in Lambert's office, when they discussed their own and other folks' literary labours and various other matters usually interesting to lads. What they thought and had to say about Chatterton will appear later on.

Reference has already been made to the poet's intimacy with Baker, who, having left school, went to the United States of America, and ultimately settled at Charleston, South Carolina. Whilst in Corn Street Chatterton maintained a correspondence with his friend, and in the course of it transmitted to him several love lyrics and other verses, most of them being for Baker to send to Bristol, to his sweetheart, Miss Eleanor Hoyland, as if they had been written by himself. Most of this correspondence has disappeared, but the poems, or half a dozen of them, having apparently been sent to Bristol, have been recovered and published.

One of Chatterton's letters to Baker, dated 6th of March, 1768, having got into the possession of Mr. George Catcott, escaped destruction, and is interesting as affording some insight into the life of the youthful poet at that period. The letter runs thus:—

DEAR FRIEND,—I must now close my poetical labours, my Master being returned from London. You write in a very entertaining style; though I am afraid mine will be the contrary. Your celebrated Miss Rumsey is going to be married to Mr. Fowler, as he himself informs me. Pretty children! about to enter into the comfortable yoke of matrimony to be at their own liberty: just apropos to the old saw—but "out of the frying-pan into the fire!" For a lover, heavens mend him; but for a husband! O excellent! What a female Machiavel this Miss Rumsey is! a very good Mistress of Nature, to discover a *demon* in the habit of a parson; to find a spirit so well adapted to the humour of an English wife, that is, one who takes off his hat to every person he chances to meet to show his staring horns, and very politely stands at the door of his wife's chamber whilst her gallant is entertaining her within. O mirabili! what will human nature degenerate into? Fowler aforesaid, declares he makes a scruple of conscience of being too free with Miss Rumsey before marriage. There's a gallant for you! Why a girl with anything of the woman would despise him for it. But no more of him.

I am glad you approve of the ladies in Charles-Town; and am obliged to you for the compliment of including me in your happiness. My friendship is firm as the white rock when the black waves soar around it and the waters burst on its hoary top, when the driving wind ploughs the sable sea, and the rising waves aspire to the clouds [teeming] with the rattling hail! So much for heroics! To speak in plain English; I am, and ever will be, your unalterable friend.

I did not give your love to Miss Rumsey, having not yet seen her in private, and in public she will not speak to me, because of her great love to Fowler; and on another occasion . . . I have been violently in love these three-and-twenty times since your departure; and not a few times came off victorious. I am

obliged to you for your curiosity, and esteem it very much, not on account of itself, but as coming from you. The poems, &c., on Miss Hoyland, I wish better for her sake and yours. The Tournament I have only one canto of, which I send herewith; the remainder is entirely lost. I am with the greatest regret going to subscribe myself, Your faithful and constant Friend, 'till death do us part, THOMAS CHATTERTON.

On the same day, apparently to go with the above letter, Chatterton wrote the following:—

DEAR FRIEND,

I have received both your favours. The Muse alone must tell my joy:—

O'erwhelmed with pleasure at the joyful news,
I strung the chorded shell, and woke the Muse.
Begin, O Servant of the Sacred Nine!
And echo joy through every nervous line;
Bring down th' ethereal choir to aid the song;
Let boundless raptures smoothly glide along.
My Baker's well! Oh words of sweet delight!
Now! now! my Muse, soar up th' Olympic height.
What wondrous numbers can the Goddess find
To paint th' ecstatic raptures of my mind?
I leave it to a Goddess more divine,
The beauteous Hoyland shall employ my line.

And on several pieces of smooth but artificial verse "the beauteous Hoyland" did employ her lover's friend. There is nothing very remarkable about these proxy love poems. Their author, writing as Baker, tells that

The bubbling fountains lose the power to please,
The rocky cataracts, the shady trees,
The juicy fruitage of enchanting hue
Whose luscious virtues England never knew,—

and so on for several lines, which only go to prove that the writer was ignorant of the natural beauties of the land he assumed to sing. The first couplet of one of these poems is of more than ordinary interest as seeming to show the author was acquainted with Marlowe's famous ballad of "Live with me and be my Love." It runs—

> Since short the busy scene of life will prove,
> Let us, my Hoyland, learn to live and love.

Elsewhere he displays a knowledge of the same author's writings.

It is very disappointing that there is so little to be gleaned about this "Dear Friend," with whose family the poet seems to have been well acquainted, from the way he refers to Mrs. Baker and Miss Baker in his letters from London. There is no doubt that if more of the correspondence between these two chums could be found, some very interesting sidelights upon Chatterton's inner life at that period of his career would be revealed. In a manuscript by the boy-poet, now in the British Museum, are some disconnected pieces, styled "Journal Sixth." One portion, addressed to this friend, begins:—

> Say, Baker, if experience hoar
> Has yet unbolted wisdom's door,
> What is this phantom of the mind,
> This love when sifted and refined?
> When the poor lover, fancy frighted,
> Is with shadowy joys delighted?
> A frown shall throw him in despair
> A smile shall brighten up his air.

Jealous without a seeming cause,
From flatt'ring smiles he misery draws;
Again, without his reason's aid,
His bosom's still, the devil's laid.
If this is love my callous heart
Has never felt the rankling dart.

. . . .

Such tremors never cowered me,
I'm flattering, impudent and free,
Unmoved by frowns and lowering eyes,
'Tis smiles I only ask and prize;
And when the smile is freely given,
You're in the highway road to heaven.
These coward lovers seldom find
That whining makes the ladies kind.
They laugh at silly silent swains
Who're fit for nothing but their chains.
'Tis an effrontery, and tongue
On very oily hinges hung
Must win the blooming, melting fair
And show the joys of heaven here.

In a similar strain the poet rambles along for upwards of two hundred lines. Whether he intended the "Journal," or any portion of it, to go to Baker is idle to inquire; probably the lines were scribbled off during a leisure hour, when there was nothing else to distract his attention, and with no thought of them ever being seen by any one but their author. Baker appears to have revisited Bristol during Chatterton's lifetime, and was in that city about a month before the poet departed for London. He was evidently "the particular acquaintance of Chatterton" who lent the various poems by him to Edward Gardner, which were published at Bristol in 1798 in Gardner's *Miscellanies*. Baker, soon after lend-

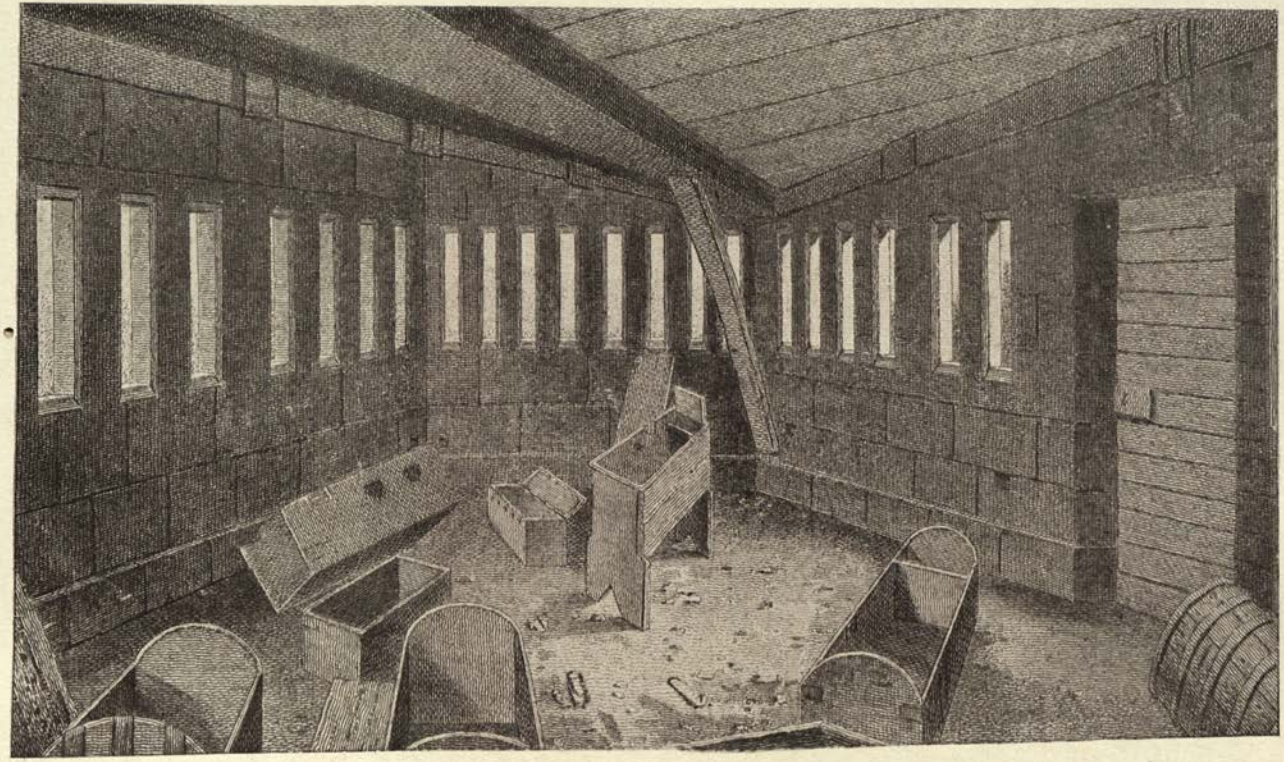
ing the poems, which were never returned to him, left Bristol finally for North America.

In a letter published in the *Monthly Mirror* for 1809 another glimpse apparently of Cary, the poet's schoolfellow, appears to be gained. The correspondent of that publication tells how he met a gentleman, seemingly Cary, in North America, who told him he was Chatterton's schoolfellow at Colston's. He remarked what an extraordinary boy the poet was, and added, "we three," Chatterton, himself, and a third boy, who may have been Phillips, but whose name is not given, "carried all before us." This gentleman, says the correspondent, was a merchant, but with "little appearance of a trafficker: he seemed more in his manner and conversation an elegant French wit. Yet I was told," continues the writer, "he understood Commerce well. He remarked Chatterton, himself, and their friend were all poor boys of Bristol."

Notwithstanding all that has been written about Lambert and his office, it must be confessed that the place had many advantages for the poet. His master was often absent for long periods of time, and during these intervals Chatterton had plenty of leisure for his own work. The situation might have become bearable if he had not been obliged to consort with the servants, including the footman who looked in upon him occasionally to remind him that his time and labour belonged to his master, and the footboy who shared the bedroom with him. There was no real privacy for him day or night, and no salary for him whether he worked or not. Of course,

Lambert knew nothing of the lad's lofty imaginings and of his communings with the great ones of yore; that his mind was enshrined in that of a priestly poet's of the Middle Ages, or that as Redcliffe de Chatterton, or some equally mythical ancestor, he was mentally performing deeds of knightly valour, or roaming through realms of a faeryland of his own creation. The scrivener could only regard him as one of Colston's charity taught and bred boys, who ranked somewhat less in his mind than his domestics, as they received wages and could leave his service if they wished to.

As might be expected, Lambert's office library was not large, and with some noteworthy exceptions it contained little save legal works. The exceptions were an ancient copy of Camden's "Britannia," a literary treasure which supplied Chatterton with much of the information he was in search of; Baker's "Chronicles," and the "Charters of Bristol." By the aid of these books, and some other similarly suitable volumes, such as Speght's "Chaucer," Kersey and Bailey's Dictionaries, Percy's "Relics," and a few more, which he could borrow from the lending libraries, his receptive mind was enabled to gather and assimilate a goodly amount of antique lore. By means of this equipment and a close study of some of Shakespeare's works Chatterton gradually fabricated a mass of pseudo-ancient literature which made his name famous wherever English poetry is read.



INTERIOR OF THE MUNIMENT ROOM, REDCLIFF CHURCH, IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

From an old engraving.

To face p. 63.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROWLEY ROMANCE

REFERENCES have already been made to the Rowley Manuscripts in these pages, and it is necessary that a full account of these wonderful writings should now be given. The history of this supposed hoard of unknown early English literature is one of the most romantic in the records of letters. The papers constituting the so-called "Rowley MSS." were reported to be a portion of the documents discovered in the chests in the Muniment Room over the north porch of Redcliff Church, and brought away from time to time by Thomas Chatterton senior, the Pile Street schoolmaster.

It has been told that when Mrs. Chatterton removed from the schoolhouse to another residence, she took away with her two boxes, containing the remainder of the parchments which had been obtained from the St. Mary Redcliff Muniment Room. According to the story told by Dean Milles, Mrs. Chatterton reported that these parchments had remained undisturbed until her son discovered them, some time after he had been at Lambert's. This assertion of the poet's mother, as to the period of Chatterton's finding the parchments, has been fully confirmed by

the evidence of William Smith, George Catcott, and other contemporary witnesses.

The story of the lad's discovery of these old parchments was first related in Bryant's "Observations" from the statement furnished by William Smith, Chatterton's "bosom friend." According to this narrative, amongst other uses to which Mrs. Chatterton had turned some of the old parchments was the making them into threadpapers. One day, when her son was home from Lambert's for his usual two hours' holiday, his attention was drawn to one of these threadpapers. Familiarised in his new occupation with the sight of parchment deeds, he took up the threadpaper and examining it found that not only was the writing very old, but the characters were very different from modern letters. "Being naturally of an inquisitive and curious turn," as William Smith remarks, he was greatly struck by these circumstances and closely questioned his mother as to how she came by the parchments. In explanation she told him the whole story of the Redcliff Church documents.

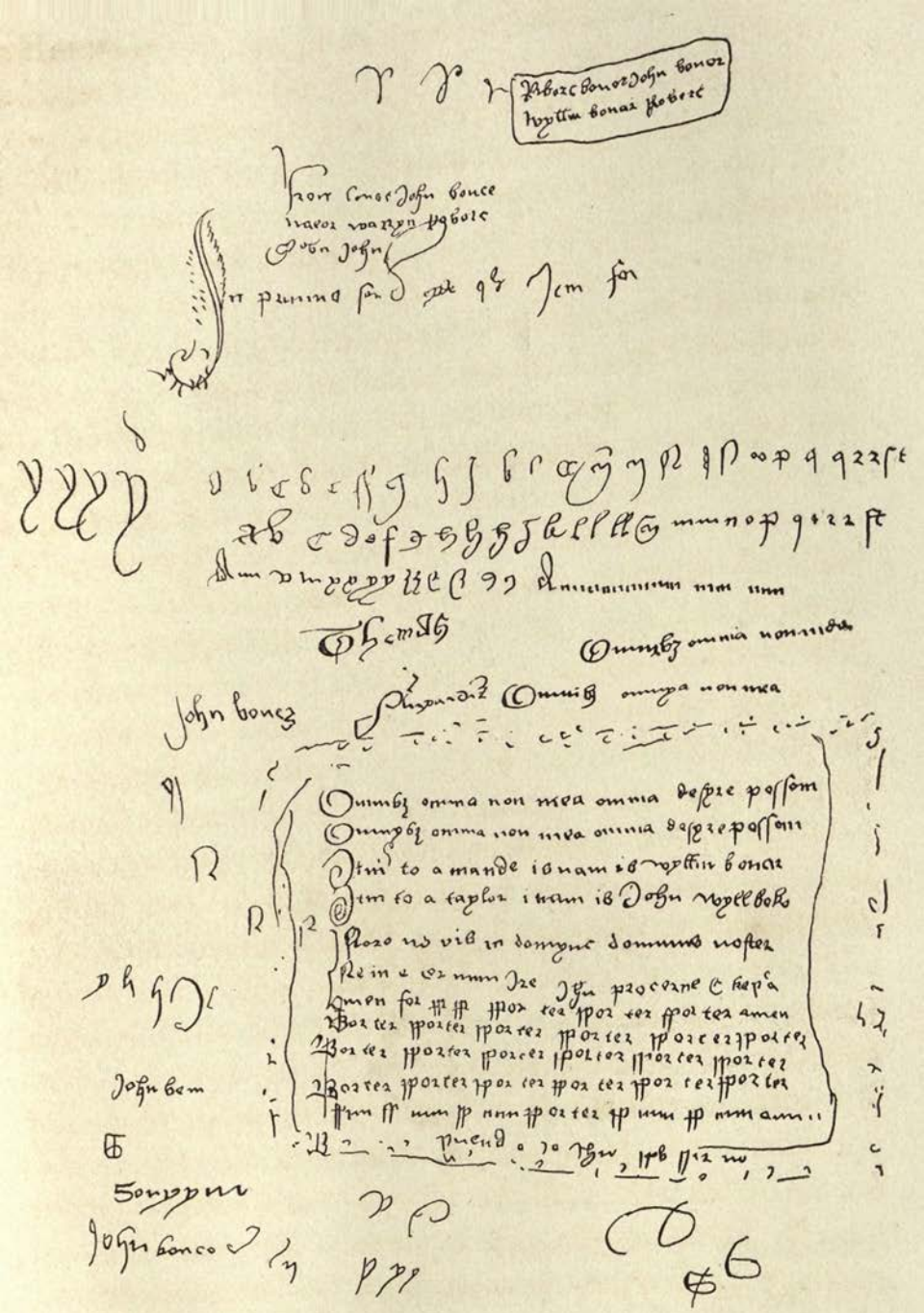
After examining some more of the deeds, the lad told his mother "that he had found a treasure and was so glad nothing could be like it." In these old neglected parchments Chatterton had discovered much useful material for his projected work; for the scheme he had, doubtless, already planned. Here was what he required in antique spelling, in phraseology and general information, for the construction of the visionary world he had conjured up in his mind and now sought to realise in words.

He took possession of all the parchments he could find about the house and was even successful in discovering a few more which had been left to perish in St. Mary Redcliff Muniment Room. His mother said "he was perpetually rummaging and ransacking every corner in the house for more parchments, and from time to time carried away those he had already found by pocketsful. One day, happening to see Clarke's 'History of the Bible' covered with one of these parchments, he swore a great oath and stripping the book, put the cover into his pocket, and carried it away."

Apparently these parchments were merely accounts connected with the Church of St. Mary Redcliff, for repairs and maintenance of the building and payment of salaries of officials belonging to the edifice. The lad must have found it no easy task to decipher the quaint and obsolete language in which these accounts and deeds were written: doubtless, in some cases they were in mediæval Latin, not too pure, and complicated by many curious contractions and technical abbreviations of contemporary usage. An account has been given in the first chapter of how the manuscripts had been brought to light by the opening of Mr. Canynges's coffer and the other ancient chests in the Muniment Room, and it is self-evident that none of them could have inspired Chatterton with the conception of his Rowley myth, or have furnished him with any portion of the contents of his Rowley productions, although they may have suggested to him the way in which to construct and carry out his scheme in connection with the romance.

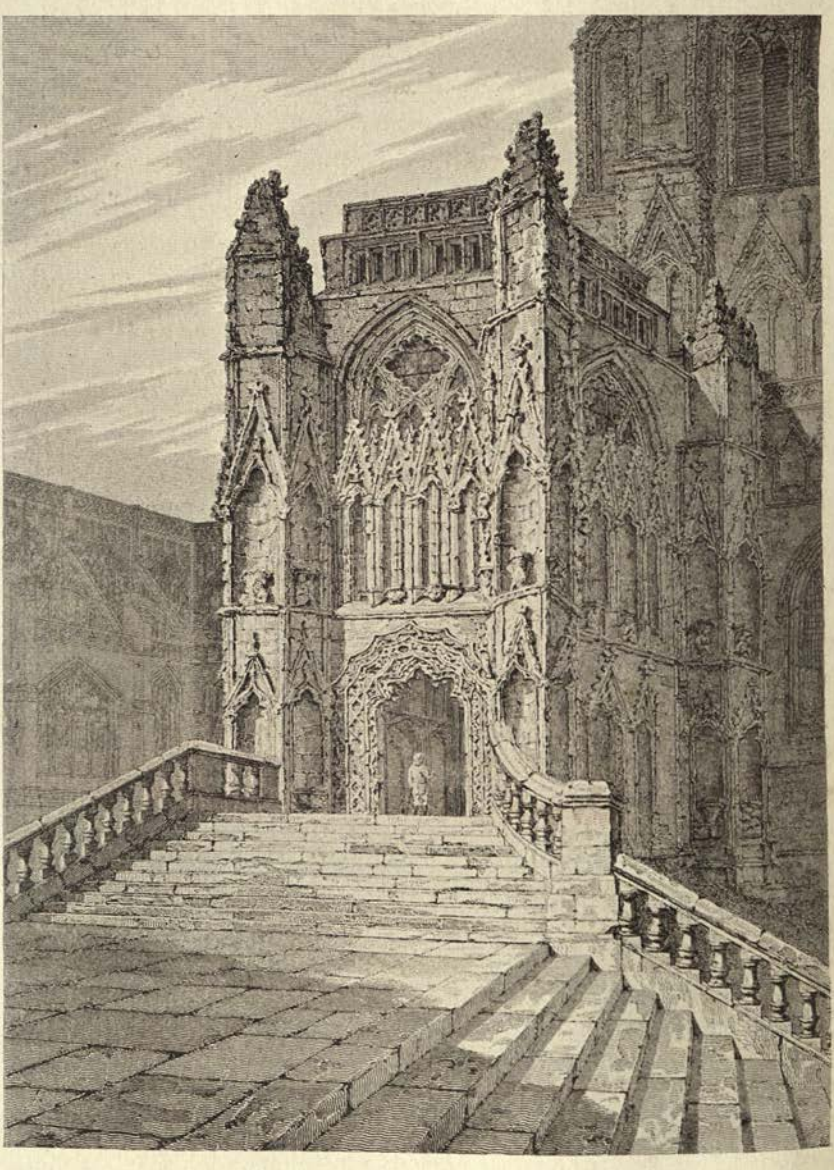
When the lad had secured these parchments and carried them to his master's office, he set to work to copy their antique calligraphy, writing the figures over and over and over again with great patience. When he had attained some little skill in this work, and it must be conceded that he never did really acquire any very great facility in the process, he proceeded to study the orthography and phraseology of the deeds, and was not so secretive about it but that some of his labour in that direction has survived for the inspection of posterity. After the poet's death the ecclesiastical authorities demanded the restitution of all the documents which had been taken from St. Mary's Church. Mrs. Chatterton handed over to them everything she could find, and amongst the articles which the poor frightened woman gave up was an old account book that had been in the possession of the Chatterton family for many years. In this old book, now retained by the authorities of Redcliff Church, are to be seen not only Chatterton's signature, but various imitations by him in red ink of old writings, together with copies of old music, old letters of the alphabet, and certain Latin words, written over many times, as if he were determined to acquire a thorough knowledge of them.[1] The boy's perseverance in his scheme is well exemplified by this most interesting and illuminating relic. As George Pryce, in his "Memorials of the Canynges' Family," points out, it gives satisfactory evidence of the means by which "Chatterton was enabled to manufacture an

[1] The *facsimile* of a page of this book, given opposite, will illustrate Chatterton's method.



*FACSIMILE* OF ATTEMPTS BY CHATTERTON TO IMITATE HANDWRITING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

To face p. 66.



NORTH PORCH, REDCLIFF CHURCH.

From J. Britton's "History of Redcliff Church."

To face p. 67.

alphabet after the fashion of the times in which Rowley, the monk of his own creation, is said to have written the manuscripts which bear his name." The discovery of this book alone is sufficient to convince any person needing convincing how the Rowley Manuscripts were concocted, as far as the mechanical work was concerned.

The poet's sister, in a letter to Sir Herbert Croft, refers to certain books she had sent to her brother, at his request, when in London, and amongst them she says were many in languages and in hands (*i.e.*, types) she could not understand. It is most probable that in some of these books, which she says were numerous, were specimens of antique alphabets and copies of old-time correspondence, similar to those in the book above referred to.

The Rowley romance must have grown into being gradually, evolved during the lad's wanderings and musings in old Redoliff Church and its precincts. Out of the all-potent influence which that noble edifice, that stone epic of mediæval times, had upon the lad's susceptible mind grew and crystallised into words a series of representative poems on an ideal William Canynges and his circle. The mythology grew into existence by degrees, piece by piece, poem by poem, even as the church, which to the boy was a visible embodiment and framework of it, had grown gradually into being. The grandeur of the exterior and the mystery and marvels of the interior of the glorious edifice had grown upon the lad's expanding mind and had been incorporated with his thoughts and day dreams until he had peopled the

stone faeryland with such creations of the past that ultimately he became so familiar with these embodiments of his fancy, that they were more real to him and he was better acquainted with them than with the modern people untoward fate had brought him into contact with. Inspired by these stone memorials of his heroes, and their quaint, archaic inscriptions, he conjured up and invested with being the various members of the Rowley circle. Of this group the chief was William Canynges junior, Chatterton's ideal personage, a knight, as created by the boy poet, *sans peur et sans reproche.* In this wearer of all goodness and greatness the lad seemed to believe, as he has even made many other people do, and to deem him to have been the veritable rebuilder and donor of St. Mary Redcliff Church.

As described by Chatterton, William Canynges was the Mæcenas of his age; as wise as he was wealthy, and as generous as he was just. He was, according to his minstrel, as free-handed as he was liberal-minded, being in these respects unlike his mythical brother Robert, who more resembled their father, a man who loved his money-bags dearer than his fellow-men. Father and elder brother dying, William Canynges became sole heritor of their enormous possessions. The enriched man at once bethought him of Thomas Rowley, his old schoolfellow and friend at the Carmelite Priory, on the site of which Colston's school was built, and in whose personality it is not difficult to trace the prototype of Chatterton himself. A modern Canynges has yet to be found.

When Rowley, who had just taken Holy Orders,

went to thank his wealthy schoolfellow for an act of thoughtful kindness, and to tender him his services, Canynges, according to the Rowley tale, said to the new priest, "I have a crotchett in my brayne that will need your aide." "If you command me I will go to Roome for you," responded Rowley. "Not so farr distant," said Canynges; "I ken you for a mickle learned priest; if you will leave the parysh of Our Ladie, and travel for mee, it shall be mickle to your profits." What Rowley was to do was to visit the abbeys and priories, and gather up all the ancient drawings of any value, at any cost. Rowley consented to go, and, according to the lad's story, first visited the Minster of Our Ladie and Sainte Good-Wyne, where he obtained a drawing of a steeple, "contryvd for the belles when runge to swaie out of the syde into the ayre."

Henceforth, liberally supported by his Bristol patron, Rowley devoted himself to going from place to place, collecting curiosities of all kinds, as set forth in these quaint manuscripts—manuscripts which no one but Chatterton ever found a trace of, despite the most persevering research of numerous antiquarians.

All through these mysterious parchments, only a very few of them ever seen by any one but Chatterton, whose transcripts are the only evidence of their existence, the devoted Rowley and his noble friend and generous patron, Canynges, are seen as the nucleus of an association of learned priests and literary gentlemen. Canynges, the five times mayor of Bristol, as imagined and depicted by Chatterton,

is the impersonation of all that is best in humanity; the founder of useful edifices; the defender of the oppressed, the friendless, and the unfortunate, as well as the host and almost regal associate of princes. He is seen as a poet and the patron of poets; an artist and a man of all-round talent and taste. He is endowed with the most liberal views, and gathers round him a band of literary men and poets, as learned and talented as ever any Italian duke or French king attracted to his court in the palmiest days of the Renaissance. Next to Canynges in importance in the group is Thomas Rowley, author of most of the manuscripts. Other poets, whose metrical productions all have a marked family likeness, are John Carpenter, Bishop of Worcester, who assists his wealthy associate to found Westbury Abbey; Sir Tybbot or Theobald Gorges, member of an ancient family having an ancestral seat at Wraxhill, near Tonstel. This illustrious knight appears in various parts of the Rowley MSS. as a poet and even as an amateur actor in the drama of "Ælla." There was really a contemporary of Canynges named Sir Theobald Gorges who is mentioned in Canynges's will, as having had a loan from him of one hundred and sixty pounds, a very large sum in those days, on the security of certain jewels. Another member of the group, according to Chatterton, was John Iscamme, Canon of St. Augustine's, Bristol, and author of the dramatic poem, "The Merrie Tricks of Lamyngestowne." He also was one of the troupe of amateurs who played in the tragedies of "Ælla" and "Goddwyn," at the

Rudde House, before Mayor Canynges and his guests. Iscamme is named as joint author with Rowley of "The Parliament of Sprites," played by the Carmelite Friars before Canynges and Bishop Carpenter at the dedication of the Church of Our Ladie of Redcliffe.

Other members of the Rowley band were Rauſe Chedder, chapman, author of a rhyming chronicle of Bristol, and Abbott John, of St. Augustin's Minster, now Bristol Cathedral, not only "the first English painter in oils," but also "the greatest poet of the age in which he lived," and who "understood the learned languages." John Lydgate, likewise a real personage, is introduced, together with other poets, as well as kings, nobles, knights, aldermen, citizens, and peasants, some having real names, but all the living, bustling, gallant throng indebted to the scrivener's inspired apprentice for the words and deeds assigned them. A notable group of real, animated human beings, every member of which possesses a separate, strongly marked individuality. It seems heartless to destroy this elaborate drama, and to show that William Canynges, however acute a merchant he may have been, and however skilful as mayor, politician, and courtier he was, was by no means the ideal noble man the young poet imagined him to be, any more than the other persons of his drama, even those who were historic realities, did the deeds, or said the words, he imputed to them. For Chatterton they were all veritable living human beings, more real and substantial for the time at least than were the members of the commonplace herd he had to mingle with.

The evolution of the Rowley romance was the most fruitful epoch of the lad's life. At this time his dominating thought and mentality were expended upon the puppets of this mediæval myth: were devoted to the romantic kingdom over which he reigned as sole and undisputed creator and monarch. All his ideas and aspirations were subordinated to the thoughts and actions of the noble-minded, unselfish characters who moved within the world he had conjured up, and who represented all the generous aims and aspirations of their youthful delineator. But his own personality was gradually becoming distorted and warped by the selfish nature of the self-seeking beings he came daily into contact with. For most of his elderly associates he displayed nothing but sarcasm and contempt, although he still loved strongly the dear relatives at home and retained an affectionate regard for, but no implicit faith in, a few schoolfellows and youthful companions. The generality of persons he encountered on his short journey through the obscured byways of his life could not inspire him with any regard or respect: his shrewd mind penetrated their petty disguises, and their faults and foibles were bared to his acute sight.

Although there is no proof that Chatterton ever doubted the reality of the qualities he had assigned Canynges and his companions, historic truth compels us to disrobe the leader of the group, at least, of his imaginary glories. George Pryce has shown conclusively that there is no proof of William Canynges junior having given any pecuniary aid

towards the building or restoration of any portion of St. Mary Redcliff during his lifetime—although it is very probable that, jointly with his fellow-citizens, he may have contributed something towards such objects—nor even in his will, when disposing of his great riches, did he leave anything for these purposes; consequently, the memory of this wealthy and influential mayor has been flourishing beneath the laurels belonging to others. A large amount of the glory surrounding Canynges's name is due solely to Chatterton's imagination. In his will, Canynges did provide for considerable sums being paid to ecclesiastics for the care of his spiritual future, with due remembrance of all persons connected with St. Mary's, the place of his sepulture. He even made provision for chanters, two clerks, sufficiently instructed in reading and singing, and for a sexton. If Chatterton knew of these bequests, as, doubtless, he did, they alone would appeal to his gratitude, seeing how his ancestors for several generations, down even to his own father, must have benefited by them. Nobly did the lad repay the inherited debt of ages.

Founded, constructed, or restored by whom it may have been, St. Mary Redcliff ranks amongst the finest ecclesiastical edifices of England. In a characteristic passage of a letter to his schoolfellow, Cary, Chatterton refers to his beloved building in these terms: "Step into Redcliffe Church, look at the noble arches, observe the symmetry, the regularity of the whole; how amazing must that idea be which can comprehend at once all that magnificence of archi-

tecture; do not examine one particular beauty, or dwell upon it minutely, take the astonishing whole into your empty pericranium. . . . Step aside a little and turn your attention to the ornaments of a pillar of the chapel; you see minute carvings of minute designs, whose chief beauties are deformity or intricacy. . . . If it is not too much trouble, take a walk to the College-gate, view the labyrinth of knots which twist round that mutilated piece, trace the windings of one of the pillars, and tell me if you don't think a great genius lost in these minutiæ of ornaments." These words were written from London, far from this haunted home of his boyish ideals, months after he had last seen the place, and yet it is seen how indelibly imprinted upon his "mind's eye" were the minutest features of the place. It was a fitting frame for the beautiful pictures the poet developed from his boyish day-dreams.

In what manner Chatterton constructed his system of antiquating his productions does not need much fulness of explanation. Even many of the earliest writers on the subject of the Rowley MSS. recognised the fact that the substitution of a few modern words for the antique or pseudo-antique equivalents used by Chatterton would make his poems comprehended by every reader; and so thoroughly has this been understood that very seldom, save in the earliest issues, have they been published in their original spelling or form; they are nearly always printed in a modern guise. As Chatterton generally supplied translations of the strange words he used, the task of transmuting

his writings into modern English does not appear to be very difficult, nevertheless, the modernisations which appear from time to time are frequently far from felicitous. The substitution of a commonplace word for one of those invented by the lad often robs a phrase of much of its vocal beauty; even in the best known and popular version of the poems by Professor Skeat, the charm of the Chattertonian phraseology often evaporates in the process of translation. As Mr. Watts-Dunton points out, Professor Skeat "seems to miss that peculiar musical movement governing Chatterton's ear, which often renders it impossible to replace by a modern word whatsoever an archaism or pseudo-archaism of his, whether invented by himself or found."

In an analysis of Chatterton's method of work, C. V. Le Grice explains the process by a reversal of the author's system; by changing back words from their archaic form to the English in which they were originally written. There are exceptional instances in which it is necessary or desirable to leave the word in the Rowley spelling, as occasionally in lieu of merely substituting an ancient or pseudo-ancient word in place of the modern one Chatterton invented a word to lengthen or shorten a verse, or to supply a needed rhyme.[1] Practically the whole secret of the fabrication of the Rowley dialect is thus explained.

When Chatterton had fairly mastered his system he was able to write out his pieces with little resort to his glossary, although after he had relinquished com-

[1] In these cases Chatterton's explanation of the strange word supplies the required meaning.

posing Rowley Manuscripts for some time, during his sojourn in London, he seems to have got so far out of the way of it, that he was not able or did not attempt to produce anything of the kind pending the absence of his glossary. This glossary was a short or much abridged dictionary, in one column of which he entered a word that took his fancy, or that he required to use, against which, in a parallel column, he entered its antique equivalent, obtained from a dictionary of ancient words. Thus, if he proposed to use the word "robe," he entered it in one column of his notebook, and in the parallel column placed against it its Rowley equivalent "gite," so that "gites of gold" must be rendered "robes of gold." This simple process is occasionally varied by the invention of new words, such as "lore" for "muscle," or by the reconstruction of old words by a mental process which can generally be followed or surmised; or by changing the spelling of words to make them suit the exigence of his rhyme or rhythm; thus in the same stanza Chatterton makes "run" rhyme with "gone," and then spells it "ryne," to make it rhyme with "twine," and so forth.

A marked peculiarity of these poetical works is the variety and modernity of the metres made use of by their author. The mediæval poets were very restricted in their metrical formations, generally employing the octosyllable line, with each line rhyming with the next, or the ballad style which came into use somewhat later, when lines of so many feet or syllables were rhymed alternately. The matter will be made clearer by a specimen of the

former by Chatterton, from his "Imitation of Our Old Poets," as follows:—

> The matin-bell had sounded long,
> The cocks had sung their morning song;

whilst his treatment of the old ballad form is shown in these lines:—

> Before him went a throng of friars
> Who did the mass-song sing,
> Behind him Master Canynge came
> Tricked like a barbed[1] king.

A much later form of rhyming, attributed to the invention of and named after Spenser, is employed by that poet in "The Faery Queen." It consists of stanzas of nine lines, the first and third rhyming with one another, the second, fourth, fifth, and seventh rhyming with each other, and the sixth, eighth, and ninth rhyming together, the whole, as Professor Skeat puts it, being expressed by letters, *a*, *b*, *a*, *b*, *b*, *c*, *b*, *c*, *c*. To the Spenserian stanza Chatterton added a tenth line, making it rhyme with the ninth, which, unlike his predecessor's more intricate and difficult plan, differed from all the preceding rhymes of the stanza, and as explained by Professor Skeat, is represented by the letters *a*, *b*, *a*, *b*, *b*, *c*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *d*.

Chatterton used this metrical arrangement for most of his chief Rowley poems, including his rhymed drama of "Ælla," and the two poems on the "Battle of Hastings." To all appearance it is an invention of his own, and he deserves due credit for the

[1] Armoured.

originality. The invention of a new form of metre is a rare feat, and Edgar Poe, a most artistic poet, asserts that "the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite and yet for centuries no man, in verse, has ever done or even seemed to think of doing, an original thing." Such originality, Poe declares, "unless in minds of very unusual force, is by no means a matter of impulse or intuition. To be found it must be elaborately sought." Chatterton's mind was undoubtedly of unusual force, and whether his favourite form of stanza was obtained by careful seeking, from impulse, or by intuition, his merit of using it is deserving of hearty commendation.

Generally Chatterton's rhymes and rhythm are good, although occasionally the latter is defective. Chaucer and his contemporaries, as well as his predecessors, and even his immediate followers, were not particularly observant of rhyme, alliteration and assonance (or similarity of sounds) having more weight with them. Alliteration was considered by them the chief thing necessary for the harmony of their productions. The author of the Rowley Manuscripts, ignorant of the fact, or ignoring it, that poets of the period nearest to that his were assigned to sounded the final *e* or *es* as a distinct syllable, rarely availed himself of this practice of pronunciation, although he made use of many modern abbreviations, such as "'twas," "I've," and so forth, which fifteenth century writers were ignorant of. Innumerable other peculiarities prove the impossibility of the Rowley Manuscripts having been produced at the date claimed for them.

More interesting for the majority of Chatterton's readers than an analysis of the technicalities of his Rowley works are the contents of these productions themselves. According to Mrs. Newton, her brother "used to read Rowley to her very often, and sometimes his own poems; but, as the latter were almost wholly satirical, the mother and grandmother grew uneasy, fearing that they [the poems] should involve him in some scrape; after which he chiefly read Rowley to her; one of the poems, on 'Our Lady's Church,' he read from a parchment, and as she believes, the 'Battle of Hastings' also; but is not certain." Being asked if she remembered any particular passages that her brother had read, Mrs. Newton replied, "The language was so old, that I could not understand them: they were all to me a mere blank, I had no kind of relish for them. This my brother used sometimes to perceive, would grow angry, and scold at me for want of taste; but what I sickened my poor brother with, I remember very well, was my inattention to 'The Battle of Hastings,' which before he used to be perpetually repeating."

The sister, also, recollected that when her brother was inclined to be communicative he would read to her from his drama of "Ælla"; and she likewise remembered him having spoken of Turgot and John Stowe, or, indeed, for the matter of that, was eventually so badgered and bothered by various persons desirous of proving that Chatterton had or had not written the Rowley works, that she was apparently able and willing to recollect or forget anything they wished her to. One thing she held

to, and that was that she never saw him copying any of these parchments at his mother's, but concluded that he did it all at Mr. Lambert's office; where once, and once only, she thinks that she saw him transcribing one of them. Mrs. Newton, with a memory of the parchments she had seen brought from the Muniment Room, described them as curled and crumpled, and "green about the edges," whereas those few which Chatterton ever produced as genuine Rowley parchments were new and white at the edges.

Thus far the Rowley poems were not known to any one outside Chatterton's own family circle; but a crisis was at hand. As the lad progressed in his scheme he grew more and more hopeful. "He would often speak in great raptures," said his sister, "of the undoubted success of his plan for their future life," and, elsewhere, she said, "when in good spirits, he would promise my mother and me should be partakers of his success." By this time he had certainly written the larger portion of the *poetical* works he proposed to introduce to the world as the composition of Rowley, a mediæval priest, and of his associates and contemporaries. (*Vide* Appendix E.)

Young as Chatterton was, he was shrewd enough and already knew enough of the world to be fully aware that verses by a poor apprentice boy, even if he could get them published, would only be treated with contempt, whilst if brought out as the composition of a learned priest and his aristocratic associates, and as written under the protection of Bristol's most famous citizen, the wealthy and time-honoured William Canynges, five times mayor of that city and

the supposed founder of her most admired edifice, Redcliff Church, they would be certain to obtain wide publicity and, as their real author undoubtedly felt, enduring popularity. How to secure the needed introduction to the world was the difficulty.

During the month of September, 1768, considerable excitement existed in Bristol on account of the date approaching for the opening, after seven years of building, of a new bridge, which had been sorely needed for a very long time past. Owing to the enormous increase which had taken place in the population and traffic of the city since the old stone bridge was erected in Henry the Second's reign, the need of a new one was of ever-increasing urgency. The civic excitement suggested to Chatterton an opportunity of testing the reception his pseudo-antique compositions would obtain on publication. He expected to gauge the way his Rowley fabrications would be accepted generally by the effect on the Bristol journalistic readers of a preliminary specimen. By this time he had, doubtless, gained a knowledge of the interior working of the Bristol *Journal*, in which his verses had hitherto appeared, and he must have been personally known to some of the editorial staff. On a day previous to October 1st, he called at the office of *Felix Farley's Journal*, and left the following contribution for insertion in the columns of that publication :—

MR. PRINTER,—The following description of the Mayor first passing over the Old Bridge, taken from an old Manuscript, may not be unacceptable to the Generality of your Readers.

Yours, &c.,

DUNHELMUS BRISTOLIENSIS.

On Fridaie was the time fixed for passing the newe Brydge: aboute the time of the tollynge the tenth clock, Master Greggorie Dalbenye mounted on a Fergreyne [1] Horse, enformed Mastor Maior all thyngs were prepared; when two Beadils want fyrst streyng fresh Stre, next came a Manne dressed up as follows:—Hose of Goatskyne, Crinepart [2] outwards, Doublet and Waystcoat also, over which a white Robe without Sleeves, much like an Albe but not so longe, reaching but to Lends [3]; a Girdle of Azure over his left Shoulder, rechde also to his Lends on the ryght, and doubled back to his Left, bucklyng with a Gouldin Buckle, dangled to his knee; thereby representing a Saxon Elderman.

In his Hand he bare a Shield, the maytrie [4] of Gilley a Brogton, who paincted the same, representyng Sainte Warburgh crossynge the Ford. Then a mickle strong Mane in Armour, carried a huge Anlace,[5] after whom came Six claryons and Six Minstrels who sang the song of Sainte Warburgh then came Master Maior, mounted on a white Horse, dight with sable trappyngs wrought about by the Nunnes of Saint Kenna with Gould and Silver, his Hayr braded with Ribbons, and a Chaperon [6] with the auntient Armes of Brystowe fastende on his Forehead. Master Maior bare in his Hande a goulden Rodde, and a Dongean [7] Squier bare in his Hande his Helmet, waulking by the Syde of the Horse; than came the Eldermen and Cittie Broders, mounted on Sable Horses dyght with white trappynges and Plumes and Scarlet Copes and Chapeous [8] having thereon Sable Plumes; after them the Preests and Frears, Parysh, Mendicaunt and Seculor, some syngyng Sainte Warburghs Song, others sounding Clarions thereto, and others some Citrialles.[9]

In thilk manner reechynge the Brydge, the Manne with the Anlace stode on the fyrst Top of a Mound yreerd in the midst of the Bridge; than want up the Manne with the Sheelde, after him the Ministrels and clarions, And then the Preestes and Freeres, all in white Albs, makyng a most goodlie Shewe; the

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[1] Iron grey. [2] Hairy side. [3] Loins.
[4] Masterpiece. [5] Sword.
[6] A little escutcheon on the foreheads of horses.
[7] Dwarf. [8] Chapeau, a hat.
[9] Cithern or guitar, but Barrett has a citron or guitrat.

Maior and Eldermen standing round, theie sang, with the sound of Clarions, the Songe of Saincte Baldwyn ; which beyng done, the Manne on the Top threwe with greet myght his Anlace into the See, and the Clarions sounded an auntrant Charge and Forloyn.[1]

Then theie sang again the Songe of Saincte Warburgh [see Appendix E] and proceeded up Chrysts hill, to the Cross, where a Latin Sermon was preached, by Ralf de Blundeville. And with Sound of Clarion theie agayne went to the Brydge, and there dined, spendyng the rest of the daie in Sportes and Plaies, the Freers of Saincte Augustine doeyng the Plaie of the Knyghtes of Brystowe, makynge a greet Fire at night on Kynwulph Hyll.

It should be particularly noted that the explanations or translations of the strange words are by Barrett, of whom more hereafter, who seemed as conversant with the Rowley idiom as was Chatterton himself. The original manuscript is in the British Museum.

This curious communication, with its mixture of modern and pseudo-ancient English, appeared in *Farley's Felix Journal* for October 1, 1768, when Chatterton wanted a little more than a month to complete his sixteenth year. It was the first published piece of those sham antique writings known as the "Rowley Manuscripts," the production of which started a controversy, which has only recently died out, as to their authorship. When it is seen what little knowledge their author possessed of the language, literature, and manners of the period he attempted to portray, the crass stupidity of believers in the antiquity of his Rowley transcripts appears almost incredible.

The account of the mayor's passage of the new

[1] Retreat.

Bridge gradually aroused interest amongst the quasi-antiquarian brotherhood of Bristol. Inquiry was instituted regarding the "old manuscript" and its possessor, and after some investigation at the office of the *Journal*, as to the identity of "Dunhelmus Bristoliensis," it was discovered that the paper had been left there by a lad named Chatterton. The scrivener's apprentice was called upon and interrogated as to his possession of the document in a manner that did not suit his proud spirit, and for a time he baffled his questioners by declining to give them any definite reply. Although still and always determined not to give up the secret of his authorship, the lad must have felt that he, as the author of the paper, deserved better treatment than that of a mere messenger or carrier of a document. Finding bullying was of no avail, a different tone was adopted by the inquisitive, and in consequence Chatterton condescended to inform them that the "Account" had been transcribed from one of the manuscripts his father had obtained from the Muniment Room over the north porch of Redcliff Church. This explanation appears to have been accepted without any demur, and the Bristolians, or rather that small section of them interested in antiquarian matters, seemed to be fully satisfied with the lad's statement.

There was one person at least to whom Chatterton did not scruple to confess that he was the author of the "Account," *if that person's testimony might be relied upon*, but seeing that he made differing statements of the affair, to different people, at different times, on each occasion suiting his words to agree

with the known views of his interlocutor on the Rowley question, his evidence can only be regarded with suspicion. John Rudhall, apprentice to an apothecary of Bristol, was one of the members of Chatterton's circle of acquaintances who were accustomed to meet on certain evenings in Lambert's office to discuss literary and other topics. According to the story which Rudhall gave to Sir Herbert Croft, many years after Chatterton's death, the poet, who frequently called on Rudhall at his master's house, obtained the youth's help in disguising a piece of parchment so as to give it the appearance of antiquity. This proceeding, Rudhall alleged, was just before the description of the opening of the old bridge appeared in *Farley's Journal;* and after the paper had been published Chatterton told him, so he said to Croft, that the parchment he had seen manipulated was what had been sent to the printer with the "Account" upon it. As this story differs from one given by Rudhall to Dean Milles, and as it does not agree with the note sent to the *Journal* as to the narrative being "taken from an old Manuscript," together with the extreme reticence of Chatterton towards all his youthful companions on the subject of Rowley generally, this asserted confession may be regarded as non-proven. It is but fair to Rudhall to state that he told Dean Milles it was only on one occasion that he beheld old parchments manufactured in the way described, and he never remembered Chatterton mentioning Rowley's poems to him, although he did on rare occasions intimate that he was possessed of some valuable literary pro-

ductions. He acknowledged, also, that Chatterton soon after broke off his acquaintance with him, resenting by a challenge some good advice Rudhall had given him in a point very essential to his "temporal and eternal happiness." Both the lads, it should be remembered, were only sixteen years old at this time, and the one was scarcely as likely to profit by the "good advice" as the other was likely to be enabled to give it.

Amongst the material collected by George Catcott respecting Chatterton is a note addressed by the poet to Rudhall, with an enclosure for a Mr. Baster (Garster?). The communications do not evince any cordiality towards Rudhall, and appear to intimate anything but friendly feeling for Baster. They are both undated and unaddressed. That to Rudhall is:—

SIR,—By copying this in your next epistle to Mr. Baster, you will oblige. Yours, &c., &c.,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

The enclosure for Baster is:—

Damn the Muses! I abominate them and their works: they are the Nurses of Poverty and Insanity. Your smiling Roman Heroes were accounted such, as being always ready to sacrifice their lives for the good of their country. He who without a more sufficient reason than commonplace scurrility, can look with disgust on his native place, is a villain, and a villain not fit to live. I am obliged to you for supposing me such a villain.

I am, your very humble servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Evidently incitement to another challenge was proffered by the hot-tempered lad in the above epistle.

## CHAPTER VI

### JUNIOR ASSOCIATES

FROM time to time Chatterton has been spoken of and described by various persons as being of a gloomy, reserved, and even sullen disposition, as well as being an omnivorous reader, but a complete misjudgment will be formed of his character and temperament if it be deemed that he was generally, or naturally, addicted to melancholia. Relatives refer to his cheerfulness in childhood; his most immediate relations record his affectionate and loving nature, and his more intimate associates speak of him as anything but cold or reserved. He had his sorrowful moments as well as his sunnier hours. His sister states that when a child he was "gloomy from the time he began to learn, but was more cheerful after he began to write poetry." In his correspondence with his friends it will be seen that he was sympathetic, warm-hearted and genial, and when writing home to his mother from London he reminds her that it is no hard task for him to make an acquaintance, and, again, that as he had "the happy art of pleasing in conversation," his company was found agreeable. He must have possessed an attractive manner, or he would not

have been tolerated in the circles he eventually obtained admittance to at Bristol. Martha Catcott, George Catcott's sister, described him to her nephew as a sad wag of a boy, always up to some joke or the other; and the sarcastic coat-of-arms which he designed for the spinster lady proves that the lad was not above enjoying a jest, and that he was not always sombre and secretive, and only when the force of unhappy circumstances made him so. There was plenty of energy and healthful strength in his young life, and had these characteristics been allowed to develop naturally, a very different story might have been Chatterton's.

Nevertheless, the youth did feel there was something missing in his temperament which his youthful companions possessed. Up to the time when he entered Mr. Lambert's office it was noted that he had been remarkably indifferent to female society, but one day when home from the scrivener's, he remarked to his sister on "the tendency severe study had to sour the temper, and declared he had seen all the sex with equal indifference *but those that Nature had made dear.*" He added that "he thought of making an acquaintance with a girl in the neighbourhood, supposing it might soften the austerity of temper study had occasioned." This discourse sounds somewhat priggish for a lad not long in his teens, but Chatterton cannot be judged by an ordinary standard, for at sixteen he was in many respects a man. With his accustomed alacrity he wrote a poem to the girl he had selected for his experiment and began a correspondence with her. Love-poems, at any rate

in the class of folks Chatterton mixed with, are not calculated to make any very deep impression on the hearts of their recipients, but Miss Maria Rumsey does appear to have responded to the youth's advances for a time. Eventually he was disgusted to learn that his selected fair one, who was, apparently, somewhat older than her lyrical swain, was engaged to be married to one of his rivals, a man whom Chatterton designated "Pitholeon" in writing about the proposed match to his friend Baker, but who was known to the common multitude as Jack Fowler. Fowler, alleged to have been a Colston's boy, but incorrectly, was a rival competitor in the "Poets' Column" of *Farley's Journal.*

If Chatterton's vanity were wounded, his heart was untroubled. Having started on a career of flirtation he is next seen taking up with quite a large circle of girls, but that they were all considered respectable may be assumed, seeing that in writing home from London to his mother he mentions them by name: in his allusions to them he shows pretty conclusively that as yet he is "fancy free." Nor had he ever had, as far as any of his Bristol companions could see, even an ordinary girl and boy courtship. As regards the lad's own references in his verses to the many conquests he had made among the fair sex and the numerous female hearts he had broken, they may be regarded as about as veracious as were his old Rowley Manuscripts. However precocious lads of fifteen or sixteen may be, they cannot be taken seriously, especially when they are poets, if they brag about their amorous exploits.

Chatterton's character has been attacked in every possible way by those deeming it advantageous to their own to do so, and even by careless or prejudiced biographers. "He would frequently walk the College Green with the young girls that statedly paraded there to show their finery," says his sister, "but I really believe that he was no debauchee (*sic*), though some have reported it." "The dear boy had faults enough," she adds pathetically, for "he was proud and exceedingly impetuous," but she refuses to believe that he could be justly accused of any traits of sexual dissipation.

It will be gathered from this that the lad did not entirely devote all his spare time to home life or study, and that, despite his love for his relatives and their surroundings, he had a spice of ordinary human nature in his disposition and could brave it out with others of his kind. Besides the girls whose promenades he shared he had some youthful male companions whom he more or less liked, or at all events associated with. Some of them were old schoolfellows and had been apprenticed in conditions similar to his own. Although his late schoolmaster Phillips and his former bedfellow Cary may have been chief in his estimation, a somewhat large circle of associates surrounded and were on friendly terms with Chatterton during his employment at Lambert's. There is a noteworthy paragraph in one of his letters to his mother, to the effect that "my youthful acquaintances will not take it in dudgeon that I do not write oftener to them, than I believe I shall, but as I had the happy art of pleasing in

conversation, *my company was often liked, where I did not like:* and to continue a correspondence under such circumstances would be ridiculous." The words italicised supply the key to much that appears strange in the reminiscences of the poet's youthful companions. He made himself an agreeable associate with most of them, discussed all subjects interesting to any of them, but, however intimate he appeared to be with some of them, he never displayed the innermost secrets of his heart to any of them.

All authorities agree that as a youth his appearance was very prepossessing. Gregory, who had his information from people personally acquainted with Chatterton, says that his person, like his genius, was premature, and that he had a manliness and dignity beyond his years. Croft, who was favourably placed to learn the truth, says, with regard to the poet's face and person, "all agree that he was a manly, good-looking boy," and "that there was something about him which instantaneously prepossessed you in his favour." "His most remarkable feature was his eyes," notes Gregory, "which, though grey, were uncommonly piercing: when he was warmed in argument or otherwise they sparkled with fire, and one eye, it was said, was still more remarkable than the other," a peculiarity, as Le Grice points out, he shared with Byron. Chatterton himself appeared fond of grey eyes, and he assigns to the heroine of his drama of "Ælla" "grey sparkling eyes." All who came in close personal contact with the young poet noticed the marvellous brilliancy of his eyes, and one of them especially, George Catcott, declared he could

never look at it long enough to see what sort of an eye it was; but he thought it seemed to be a kind of a hawk's eye, "you could see his soul through it."

Barrett said from the nature of his profession he took particular notice of Chatterton's eyes. He never saw any like them, "one was still more remarkable than the other. You might see the fire roll at the bottom of them, as you sometimes do in a black eye, but never in grey ones, which his were." According to Croft's account, who must have had this information at second or third hand, the surgeon often would send for Chatterton and "differ from him in opinion, on purpose to make him earnest and to see how wonderfully his eye would strike fire, kindle and blaze up." Everybody, indeed, who had much to do with the youth appeared to be startled by the brilliancy of his looks. Edward Gardner, although too young at the time, according to his own words, to be a competent judge of either Chatterton's acquirements or manners, particularly recollected "the philosophic gravity of his countenance and the keen lightning of his eye;" whilst Capel informed Bryant, who states he had heard the same circumstance from others, that upon the poet being any way irritated, or otherwise greatly affected, there was "a light in his eyes, which seemed very remarkable."

Some people were frightened by the severity of his looks, and even his relative, Mrs. Ballance, is reported by Croft to have declared that when he was lodging with her in London, and had much to intensify the sorrows of his situation, "he would often look

steadfastly in a person's face, without speaking, or seeming to see the person, for a quarter of an hour or more, till it was quite frightful; during all which time she supposes, from what she has since heard, his thoughts were gone about something else." But these recollections of his relative refer to the latter part of his life, whilst more pleasing memories of his earlier years are plentiful. As his first biographer remarks, "By the accounts of all who were acquainted with him, there was something uncommonly insinuating in his manner and conversation. . . . His extensive, though in many instances superficial, knowledge, united with his genius, wit, and fluency, must have admirably accomplished him for the pleasures of society. His pride, which perhaps should rather be termed the strong consciousness of intellectual excellence, did not destroy his affability. He was always accessible, and rather forward to make acquaintance than apt to decline the advance of others."[1]

His moderation in eating and drinking was wonderful, especially for one so young. It is averred that "he seldom ate animal food and never tasted any strong or spirituous liquors," a most remarkable circumstance in those days of excessive drinking, and amongst all classes and all ages of people. In his burletta, "The Revenge," Chatterton exclaims:—

[1] See his letter to his mother, p. 218, wherein he says, "Last week being in the Pit of Drury Lane Theatre, I contracted an immediate acquaintance, which you know is no hard task to me, with a young gentleman."

I scorn the flowing bowl,
It prostitutes the sense, degenerates the soul,

and cannot find words strong enough to express his contempt for the drunkard. Gregory asserts that he lived chiefly on a morsel of bread, or a tart, with a draught of water, and the people with whom he lodged in London fully confirm this by their statements as to his habits whilst with them. Amongst the memoranda preserved by the Rev. Samuel Seyer, for a third volume of his "History of Bristol," are many notes about Chatterton, chiefly obtained from George Catcott and Barrett, and the following record throws a strong light upon the relations between the surgeon and the young poet: "With all his profligacy"—having reference to Chatterton's free-thinking—"Mr. Barrett could never make him drink." Any comment on this is needless.

Croft was informed that when Chatterton was but a child, "he would often refuse to take anything but bread and water, even if it did happen that his mother had a hot meal; because he had a work in hand and he must not make himself more stupid than God had made him."

For a youth his sayings were remarkable. It was a favourite maxim with him that "man was equal to anything, and that everything might be acquired by diligence and abstinence," whilst he asserte d that "God had sent His creatures into the world with arms long enough to reach anything if they would be at the trouble of extending them." "To swear by the honour of his ancestors" he deemed a sacred matter;

and Gregory, after referring to instances of his high sense of dignity, remarks, the most amiable feature in his character was his generosity and attachment to his mother and relations.

The same authority, alluding to the number of friends he had, says, "Notwithstanding his disposition to satire, he is scarcely known to have had any enemies;" but unfortunately this last assertion is not quite borne out by circumstances, as will be proved in the course of this narrative.

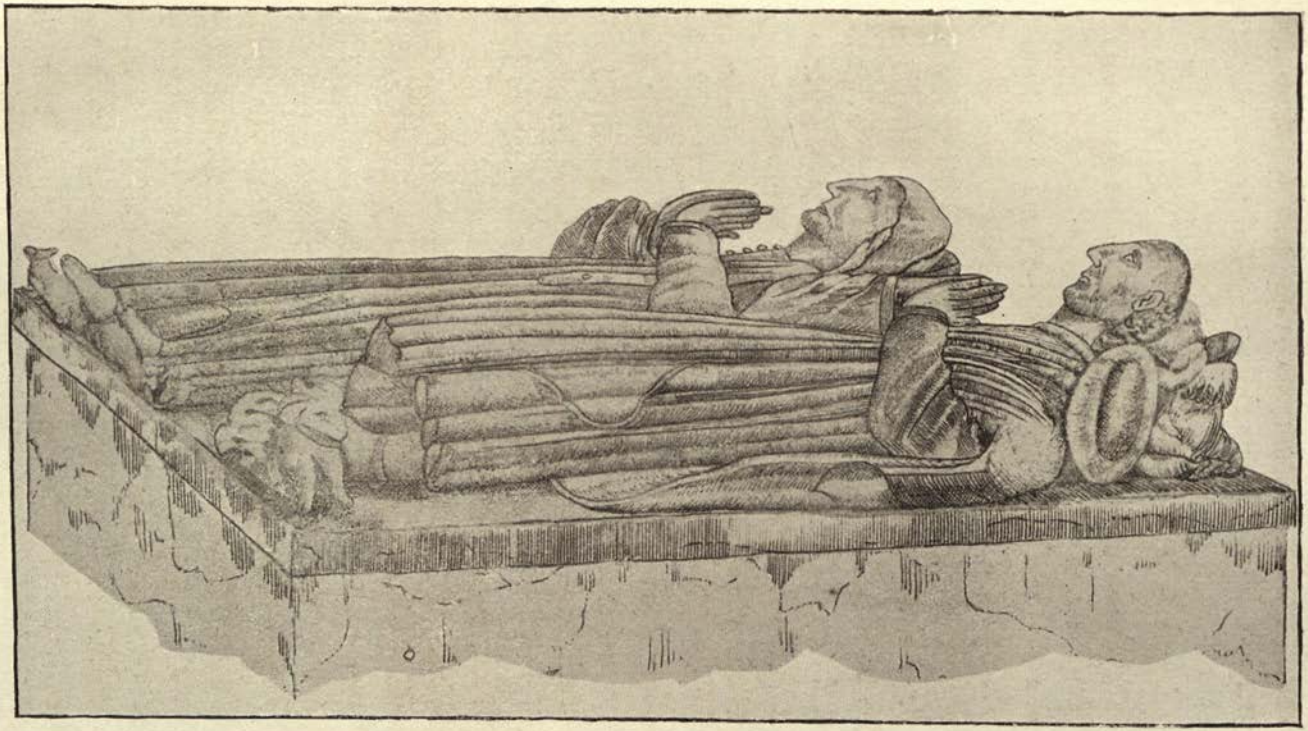
His first biographer deems his knowledge was sometimes superficial, and, indeed, the fewness of his years scarcely permitted it to be otherwise, but his reading was very extensive. His sister mentions a catalogue of books he had read to the number of several hundreds, and Chatterton, evidently with reference to himself, in his story of "Astræ Brockage" published in the *Town and Country Magazine*, speaks with his usual exaggeration of "a young author who has read more books than Magliabecchi." The list of his accomplishments is, indeed, lengthy, and the account which the not too friendly Thistlethwaite gave of them scarcely overstated the truth. Besides his voluminous writings and his extensive reading, *he made time*, either during the day or in the solitude of night, to study heraldry, music, and astronomy. From Barrett and from Barrett's books be obtained at least a smattering of theoretical surgery, and the surgeon's "History of Bristol," as well as many unpublished sketches, exist to prove that Chatterton had acquired a greater knowledge of architecture than have many students of that art after several years'

study. In his "Storie of Canynges" the boy poet certainly indulged in a little self-portraiture when he described his hero:—

> In all his simple gambols and child's play,
> At every merry-making, fair or wake,
> I kenned a scattered light of Wisdom's ray;
> He ate down learning with the wastle cake—
> As wise as any of the aldermen,
> He'd wit enough to make a mayor at ten.

His amusements, at least during his life in Bristol, were restricted and simple. Although during his last year or so at that city he visited at the houses of professional people and mixed in the society of well-to-do families, the associates of his own age were generally of his own rank in life. His constant and most frequent companion, William Smith, was the son of a brewer of good standing in society. The two lads seem to have indulged chiefly in writing verses and rambling into the country around Bristol. His sister and his mother spoke of him spending his Sundays in walking into the country as far and as long as his limited time permitted, and Smith's reminiscences of these excursions are amongst the most interesting and suggestive of anything recorded of the poet.

The accounts furnished by several of the comrades Chatterton was acquainted with at this period, whilst interesting as records of the impression he made upon these youths, will be found to be all more or less influenced by their own views of what he was *supposed* to have said, done, or appeared. John Rudhall's statements have been referred to already.



EFFIGIES OF WILLIAM CANYNGES AND HIS WIFE.

From George Pryce's "Memorials of the Canynges's Family.

To face p. 96.

Thomas Capel, a jeweller's apprentice, working in the same building as Chatterton, was another of these associates. He stated to Jacob Bryant, one of the earliest writers and commentators on the Rowley Manuscripts, that he had been acquainted with the poet, and might have been very intimate with him, but the "young man's pride disgusted him; and he had at the same time a dislike to his principles." Nevertheless, they maintained an intimacy, and Capel assured Bryant that often when he called on Chatterton he found him copying manuscripts, certainly no unusual occupation for a scrivener's office lad. Asked whether they were parchments, Capel, "with proper caution," would not take upon himself to say, but he ventured the suggestion that they would not be found of much value. He well remembered "that they lay in heaps; and in great confusion and seemed rumpled and stained: and near them were the papers upon which Chatterton was transcribing." All, doubtless, of interest to Jacob Bryant, but not of much importance to anybody else. He added that the poet did speak of them as ancient writings, and stated he was "studying to understand the old language in which they were written." Capel's further suggestion, "this privacy in writing might arise from the dislike Mr. Lambert showed to Chatterton's being employed in this manner," would be incomprehensible but for his further remark, "that he never saw the lad copying but when his master was gone from home."

It may be added that this apprentice boy deemed Rowley's poems, which he had, probably never read,

far superior to Chatterton's other compositions, and said that *he knew* "that he was incapable of writing them," and that "he did not believe there were two persons in Bristol who thought Chatterton was the author," in which belief he may have been correct In speaking of Chatterton's appearance, Capel's remarks may be found more interesting. He said, "There was generally a dreariness in his look and a wildness; attended with a visible contempt for others," which is very natural when it is seen the class "the others" consisted of. Moreover, continued the sapient narrator, "there was upon his being any way irritated, or otherwise greatly affected, a light in his eyes, which seemed very remarkable," and should have been, and probably was, a danger-signal to bores.

The most intimate associate of Chatterton at this time was Thomas Cary. They were schoolfellows together at Colston's, Cary having entered the Hospital on the 11th of March, or only five months before Chatterton, and having left it in September, 1766, nine months earlier than the poet. Cary was, doubtless, the bedfellow referred to by Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton; and yet, despite the intimacy such a close association must have engendered, and the sincere affection the poet bore for his school chum and brother author, Cary evidently never knew the truth regarding the Rowley papers. As he states in a letter to George Catcott, he had from his intimacy with Chatterton "had it in my power to and did observe the progress of his genius from his infancy to the fatal dissolution," and yet such was

the secrecy the creator of Rowley preserved with all, even his nearest and dearest, Cary was able to assert, and apparently with all sincerity, that although Chatterton's "abilities for his age were undoubtedly very great," yet in his opinion they "were not equal to the works of Rowley." That is to say, Cary, notwithstanding the fact that he was a well-educated man, an experienced writer of prose and verse, and the constant associate of Chatterton, not having, as he confesses, "any taste myself for ancient poetry," and never having been shown the Rowley poems by their author, was not a competent judge of their value or of Chatterton's ability to produce them.

Despite this slackness of appreciating his friend's genius, Thomas Cary was really an experienced if not a very talented author. Dr. Wilson—who has been blindly followed by succeeding biographers, had to imagine what he did not know, and thus wrongly makes a lad named Baker, who never was a pupil at Colston's Hospital, the bedfellow of Chatterton at that institution—states that Cary was a pipe-maker of Bristol, in humble circumstances, confusing him, apparently, with a man named Carty of that city, and upon the supposition bases various fallacies. Thomas Cary was one of those aspiring pupils at Colston's who, following the lead of their beloved master, Phillips, took to versifying, and adopted authorcraft, not as a profession, but as a hobby. Cary from his position and associations seems to have done better than most of the small band of poetasters inspired by Phillips. He was apprenticed

to Henry Cruger, a merchant doing business with North America; one of the Members of Parliament for Bristol, and a man of no slight notoriety in the politics of his time.

If Cary may be identified as the schoolfellow of Chatterton referred to in the *Monthly Mirror* for October, 1809, he must have followed in his employer's footsteps so far as to become an affluent mercantile man and well versed in American commercial affairs. At any rate he was Chatterton's most intimate associate in Bristol and his confidential correspondent when the poet went to London. He dabbled in political economy, and published a "Discourse on Trade and other Matters;" he was a contributor to the magazines of the day and is credited with a knowledge of music.

It is seen that, despite his knowledge of and affection for Chatterton, after the poet's death, when George Catcott made known to him his desires on the Rowley controversy, Cary readily met the pewterer's wishes respecting the assumed authenticity of the manuscripts, and wrote to him in the following terms :—

I have frequently heard Chatterton make mention of such writings being in his possession, shortly after his leaving school, when he could not be more than fifteen years of age; and that he had given Mr. Barrett and Mr. Catcott part of them. Not having any taste myself for ancient poetry, I do not recollect his ever having shown them to me; but that he often mentioned them, at an age when (great as his capacity was) I am convinced he was incapable of writing them himself, I am very clear in, and confess it to be astonishing, how any person knowing these circumstances can entertain even a

shadow of a doubt of their being the works of Rowley. Of this I am very certain, that if they are not Rowley's, they are not Chatterton's. This, I think I am warranted in asserting, as from my intimacy with him I had it in my power to, and did observe the progress of his genius from his infancy to the fatal dissolution. His abilities for his age were beyond conception great but not equal to the works of Rowley, particularly at the age that he produced them to light. I think I need say no more to convince any rational being of their being genuine; in which persuasion I rest.

That Cary, who had no taste for ancient poetry, whatever knowledge he may have had of political economy and commerce, was no competent judge of the Rowley Manuscripts, or of their author's capacity to write them, needs no discussion.

There was yet one other associate of Chatterton who, on being appealed to for his views on the subject of the lad's talents, and his ability to write the Rowley Manuscripts, gave them in a way to satisfy the wishes of his interrogators. James Thistlethwaite, whilst necessarily furnishing some facts in his lengthy reminiscences of his deceased companion, has perverted dates and misstated events with so much craft that it is dangerous to place trust in any portion of his narrative not confirmed by more trustworthy evidence. On his leaving school, not at Colston's Hospital, as so confidently asserted by Professor Wilson and his copyists, but, apparently, one of the Bristol free schools, Thistlethwaite had been apprenticed to a Mr. Grant, bookseller and stationer, having business premises in the vicinity of Corn Street. Eventually he became a law student, obtained some position in the legal profession, and, like

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so many of Chatterton's associates, dabbled in literature, "The Prediction of Liberty," "The Tories in the Dumps," and "The Consultation" being amongst the various works he published. Dr. Glynn, a man whose printed obscenities exceeded all the most disgusting licence of those times, and whose filthy references to Chatterton no publication of these days would venture to reproduce, in his attempted disparagement of the poor lad, declared that the last-named work of Thistlethwaite was superior to the acknowledged verses of Chatterton, but any merit it might have appeared to Dr. Glynn to possess, and really it appears to have none, is discounted by the fact, pointed out by Thomas Warton, that it is pillaged wholesale from a volume styled "Patriotism," by Thomas Bentley, published in 1765.

In a letter to Dean Milles, Thistlethwaite thus replies to a request to fulfil his promise of relating particulars of his acquaintance with Chatterton:—

In the summer of 1763, being then in the twelfth year of my age, I contracted an intimacy with one Thomas Phillips, who was for some time usher or assistant master of a charity school. . . . Phillips, notwithstanding the disadvantages of a very confined education, possessed a taste for history and poetry; of the latter, the magazines and other periodicals of that time furnish no very contemptible specimen.

Towards the end of that year, by means of my intimacy with Phillips, I formed a connection with Chatterton, who was on the foundation of that school and about fourteen months younger than myself. The poetical attempts of Phillips had excited a kind of literary emulation amongst the elder classes of the scholars. . . [redacted] all these trifling contentions . . . Chatterton appeared merely as an idle spectator. . . .

Contenting himself with the sports and pastimes more adapted

to his age, he apparently possessed neither inclination nor indeed ability for literary pursuits ; nor do I believe (notwithstanding the evidence adduced to the contrary) that he attempted the composition of a single couplet during the first three years of my acquaintance with him.

Going down Horse Street, near the School, one day during the summer of 1764, I accidentally met with Chatterton. Entering into conversation with him . . . he informed me that he was in possession of certain old MSS. which had been found deposited in a chest in Redcliffe Church and that he had lent some or one of them to Phillips. Within a day or two after this, I saw Phillips and repeated to him the information I had received from Chatterton. Phillips produced a MS. on parchment, or vellum, which I am confident was "Elenoure and Juga," a kind of pastoral eclogue, afterwards published in *The Town and Country* for May, 1769. . . . The writing was yellow and pale, manifestly occasioned by age, and consequently difficult to decipher. Phillips had with his pen traced and gone over several of the lines . . . and by that means laboured to attain the object of his pursuit, an investigation of their meaning. I endeavoured to assist him, but, from an almost total ignorance of the character, manners, language and orthography of the age in which the lines were written all our efforts were unprofitably exerted. . . . Phillips was mortified, expressing his sorrow at his want of success, and repeatedly declaring his intention of resuming the attempt at a future period.

It will readily be acknowledged that Thistlethwaite, making these statements seventeen years after the events to which he refers, could scarcely be implicitly relied on, and seeing that both Phillips and Chatterton had been dead for many years, he had little need to fear his remarks would be authoritatively controverted. Apparently he had something to conceal in respect to his own humble origin, which he feared might be revealed by the confession of too early an acquaint-

ance with Colston's charity scholars. At any rate, the "kind of pastoral eclogue" could scarcely have been recognised by this thirteen-year-old schoolboy until, long after, he beheld the poem of "Elinoure and Juga" in print, nor was it possible for Chatterton, not then twelve, to have written so fine a piece, seeing the style and calibre of the verses he was then producing. The unimpeachable testimony of his mother and sister, confirmed by the positive evidence of all unprejudiced witnesses, proves that Chatterton was unaware of the existence of the so-called "Canynges" deeds, upon which the Rowley romance was based, until after he had left Colston's Hospital.

Thistlethwaite had an object to serve by his story, and all his narrative was written with this purpose in view. His interesting incident, repeated and commented upon by Wilson and his many followers, of Phillips's inability to decipher one or some of the Rowley Manuscripts, and all the circumstantial evidence proffered in connection with it, must be relegated to that limbo whence so many of the statements made about Chatterton deserved to be consigned for ever:—

Although so much of Thistlethwaite's narrative is worse than inaccurate, there appears to be some facts stated in it, with some exaggeration, it is true, therefore it is desirable to resume it:—

In the year 1765 (he states) I was put apprentice to a stationer at Bristol. . . . Towards the latter end of 1767, or the beginning of 1768, being sent to the office of Mr. Lambert, for some books which wanted binding, I found Chatterton, who was an articled clerk to Mr. Lambert, and who, as I collected from

his own conversation, had been adventuring in the fields (*sic*) of Parnassus. . . .

In the course of the years 1768 and 1769, wherein I frequently saw and conversed with Chatterton, the eccentricity of his mind and the versatility of his disposition seem to have been singularly displayed. One day he might be found busily employed in the study of Heraldry and English antiquities, both of which are numbered amongst the most favourite of his pursuits ; the next, discovered him deeply engaged, confounded and perplexed, amidst the subtleties of metaphysical disquisition or lost and bewildered in the abstruse labyrinth of mathematical researches ; and these in an instant again neglected and thrown aside to make room for astronomy and music, of both of which sciences his knowledge was entirely confined to theory. Even physic was not without a charm to allure his imagination, and he would talk of Galen, Hippocrates, and Paraçelsus with all the confidence and familiarity of a modern empiric. . . .

During the year 1868, at divers visits I made him, I found him employed in copying Rowley from what I then considered and do still consider as authentic and undoubted originals. By the assistance he received from the glossary to Chaucer, he was enabled to read with great facility, even the most difficult of them ; and unless my memory very much deceives me, I once saw him consulting the " Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ " of Skinner.

I perfectly remember to have read several stanzas copied from the " Death of Syr Charles Bawdin," the original also of which then lay before him. . . . I am nevertheless of opinion that the language was much more obsolete than it appears in the edition published by Mr. Tyrwhitt ; probably occasioned by certain interpolations of Chatterton, ignorantly made with an intention, as he thought, of improving them.

Several pieces which afterwards made their appearance in the *Town and Country Magazine* were written by him during this year 1768, particularly certain pretended translations from the Saxon and Ancient British ; very humble and in some instances very unsuccessful attempts at the manner and style of Ossian. Chatterton whenever asked for the originals of *these* pieces hesitated not to confess, that they existed only in his own imagination, and were merely the offspring and invention of

fancy; on the contrary his declaration whenever questioned as to the authenticity of the poems attributed to Rowley, was invariably and uniformly in support of their antiquity, and the reputation of their author, Rowley, instantly sacrificing thereby all the credit he might, without a possibility of detection, have taken to himself . . . a circumstance which I am assured could not fail of operating upon a mind like his, prone to vanity and eager of applause.

With respect to the first poem of the "Battle of Hastings" it has been said that Chatterton himself acknowledged it to be a forgery of *his own;* but let any unprejudiced person advert only for a moment to the situation in which Chatterton then stood, and the reason and necessity of such a declaration will be apparent.

The very contracted state of his finances, aided by a vain desire of appearing superior to what his circumstances afforded, induced him, from time to time, to dispose of the poems in his possession, to those from whose generosity and patronage he expected to derive some considerable pecuniary advantages. I will not hesitate to assert, and I speak from no less authority than Chatterton himself, that *he was disappointed in this expectation,* and thought himself not sufficiently rewarded by his Bristol patrons, in proportion to what he thought his communication deserved. From this circumstance it is easy to account for the answer given to Mr. Barrett, on his repeated solicitation, for the original, viz., *that he himself wrote that poem for a friend;* thinking perhaps that if he parted with the original poem, he might not be properly rewarded for the loss of it.

"That vanity and an inordinate thirst after praise eminently distinguished Chatterton, all who knew him will readily admit . . . from a full assurance of the truth of which proposition, I conceive myself at liberty to draw the following inference, that had Chatterton been the author of the poems imputed to Rowley . . . he would have made it his first, his greatest pride.

One important remark will be noticed in Thistlethwaite's narrative, and that is, he had Chatterton's own authority for the statement that he was disappointed

in his expectations as to the reward he had expected to receive from the men who had importuned him for the Rowley Manuscripts, and who, when they had obtained them, gave him little or nothing for his treasures. That Chatterton was disappointed in this important matter explains much. Had he taken to them poetry or prose, confessedly written by himself, Messrs. Barrett, Catcott, and company would have scorned the offering, but the manuscripts presented to them as by the mediæval priest, Rowley, were valuable in many ways. Their eagerness to get possession of such manuscripts tempted the lad to hand over his poetic productions to them, but the poverty of their recompense showed him their inability to gauge the real value of their acquisitions. Their powerlessness to make these works publicly known became apparent and proved to him that he must seek elsewhere for public recognition and reward.

From Thistlethwaite's communication it will be readily perceived that he was prepared to accept the views of the living in preference to those of the dead, but there is little need to enlarge further upon the self-evident fact. It will have been observed that amongst the various pursuits Thistlethwaite refers to as occupying the attention of Chatterton was that of Heraldry. He had acquired some knowledge of the subject, never much more than a smattering, in the following way. Amongst the youthful acquaintances he made at this period of his career was Thomas Palmer, an apprentice to a jeweller named Henderson, whose business place was in the same building in Corn

Street as Lambert's. Palmer did the heraldic drawing and engraving for his employer, and, according to his own account, was very useful to Chatterton. They were accustomed to meet at the gatherings which took place in the scrivener's office, and the poet, according to Palmer, being very anxious to understand heraldic drawings, applied to him for instructions on the subject. This was given to him by the engraver, who also, so he said, taught him to colour his designs with their proper colours. Many of the sketches Chatterton executed at this time are in the British Museum collection, and they prove that his knowledge on the subject was but rudimentary.

Chatterton became very fond of heraldic studies, despite the fact that amid his many occupations he never thoroughly mastered the art, and he liked to tell people what their coats-of-arms were and how they originated. He informed Palmer that persons used to go to the Holy Land as pilgrims and that when they returned home they brought back with them branches of palm, and were therefore called "Palmers"; and that the arms of the Palmer family were "three palm branches and their crest a leopard, or tiger with a palm branch in its mouth." Later on will be seen one of the uses Chatterton put his acquirements in the way of Heraldry to, when producing the alleged pedigree of Burgum, the pewterer.

Palmer states that he spent much time in the evenings with Capel, Thistlethwaite, and others, in Lambert's office, discussing with Chatterton literary matters, and debating over the contributions they were preparing to send to the Bristol periodicals. As

is known, Chatterton had frequently contributed to *Farley's Journal*, but without attracting any attention until he sent in the paper on the "Mayor's passing over the Old Bridge," and his most intimate associates do not appear to have had any knowledge of the fact that he had already published verses.

It was within Palmer's remembrance that Chatterton was left alone a great deal in Lambert's office, and on such occasions appeared to dislike being disturbed. He was at times very reserved and was considered by his comrades to be extremely proud. For several days together he would go in and out of the office without speaking to any one, and appeared absorbed in thought, but after such periods of seclusion he would invite his associates into his room and, according to the testimony of Palmer, read portions of the Rowley poems to them.

There is yet another youthful friend of Chatterton to be introduced. William Bradford Smith, the poet's "bosom friend," as his nephew subsequently designated him, may not have been one of the youths who congregated together at Lambert's, but he was somewhat of a Bohemian, consorted with "all sorts and conditions of men," but was not considered a welcome guest at his parents' table. In a premature elegy on this William, by Chatterton, due to a report that he had killed himself, and endorsed by its author, "Happily mistaken, having since heard from good authority, it is Peter," the "good authority" being, probably, William, as Peter was his brother, the poet addresses the presumed suicide as "Despised, an

alien to thy father's breast;" and in his usual terms of exaggeration, declares—

> I loved him with a brother's ardent love,
> Beyond the love which tenderest brothers bear.

Richard Smith, the surgeon, speaks of Chatterton's intimacy with his Uncle William as the natural result of them being "birds of a feather," referring apparently to the circumstance that his uncle wrote verses in torrents daily, to within a few hours of his death. Some of these verses, it should be pointed out, appear to have been bound up with the Chattertonian MSS. in the British Museum, under a misapprehension as to their authorship, but their style should have been sufficient to have discredited any idea that they were Chatterton's.

It is uncertain how Chatterton first became acquainted with William Smith, but Smith, as one of the mob of young Bristolians who spent their spare time in writing verses, had claims to Chatterton's notice. The two soon became boon companions, if not confidential friends. William Smith belonged to a higher grade of society than the rest of Chatterton's youthful associates, and it is noticeable that Smith speaks in stronger terms and in a more exalted manner of the boy poet than do any of the apprentice lads or Colston's boys. He tells how Chatterton frequently consulted him about studying Latin; having a desire to learn the language and thought to be able to do so without the aid of a master. Smith states that he "always dissuaded him from it, as being in itself impracticable," why he does not say, and

advised him "by all means to try at French." "Try French if you please. Of that you may acquire some knowledge without much difficulty, and it will be of real service to you. As to Latin, depend upon it you will find it too hard for you."

Why Chatterton was to be dissuaded from studying a language that would be useful to him in his literary and probably valuable in his legal pursuits it is difficult to see; especially in favour of attempting another which might not prove of great utility to him and where a master was indispensable. The lad did obtain a smattering of both tongues, but had no opportunity of gaining much knowledge of either. Smith was a wayward lad, who grew into an eccentric man, after a series of escapades and adventures numerous and singular enough to fill volumes. However great the intimacy between the two lads may have been, Chatterton by the time he became intimate with Smith had grown wary and more secretive than ever, so he never confided to the "bosom friend" the fact that he had any more to do with the Rowley Manuscripts than introduce them to the public. Whilst still at Lambert's Chatterton would read to Smith various writings in prose and verse, which he ascribed to Rowley, or his presumed circle; and frequently at the scrivener's Smith had to listen to pieces apparently just transcribed by Chatterton, but without finding any pleasure in the reading, candidly confessing, "I had no taste for such things."

There were other occasions when the two lads met on more congenial ground. Chatterton was always very fond of walking in the fields, says his

companion, "and particularly in Redcliffe Meadows; and of talking about the Rowley Manuscripts. 'Come,' he would say, 'you and I will take a walk in the meadow. I have got the cleverest thing for you that ever was. It is worth half-a-crown merely to have a sight of it; and to hear me read it to you.' When we were arrived at the place proposed, he would produce his parchment; show it, and read it to me. There was one spot in particular, full in view of the church, in which he seemed always to take a particular delight. *He would frequently lay himself down, fix his eyes upon the church, and seem as if he were in a kind of ecstasy or trance.* Then on a sudden and abruptly, he would tell me, 'that steeple was burnt down by lightning; that was the place where they formerly acted plays': meaning if I remember rightly what is now called the Parade. I recollect very assuredly that he had a parchment in his hand at the very time when he gave me this description; but whether he read this history out of that parchment, I am not certain."

Being further asked by Dr. Glynn if Chatterton ever spoke of the Rowley Manuscripts as if he would have it considered they were his own composition, Smith waxed warm, deeming his friend's veracity was being impugned, and answered, "Chatterton not only never offered to claim them as his own, but never so much as dropped any hint that way; never seemed as if he wanted people to suspect, much less believe, that they were of his composing. 'Look you, Sir,' said he, 'you will be pleased to understand me right, what I have here said, I mean

in respect of such things only as he gave to Mr. Catcott and Mr. Barrett, which were undoubtedly ancient. Whatever he gave out as his own, or published as his own, I know to have been his, unquestionably. He had no occasion to be beholden to any other man's labour for a character. He was one of the most extraordinary geniuses I ever knew. The most extraordinary I ever heard of.'" Smith then launched forth into an encomium, upon the deceased Chatterton, which seems to have disgusted the interrogator, who deemed it extravagant and only excusable in one who had so great a regard for his friend's memory.

Mr. George Catcott possessed a curious epistle addressed by Chatterton to some friend, as "The Infallible Doctor," by whom it is stated he indicated William Smith. It is not known what authority either Cottle or Catcott had for this indication, but the contents of the letter correspond closely with those of the communication his sister says he wrote to his friend Baker, which she described as containing "all the hard words in the English language." The letter to Baker already quoted came from the collection of George Catcott, it may be remarked, and that now referred to may have been intended for Baker also. It is undated and reads thus :—

INFALLIBLE DOCTOR,—Let this apologise for long silence. Your request would have been long since granted, but I know not what it is best to compose : as Hendecasyllabum carmen, Hexastichon, Ogdastich, Tetrametrum, or Septenarius. You must know I have been long troubled with a Poetical Cephalophonia, for I no sooner begin an Acrostick, but I wander into

a Threnodia. The poem ran thus: the first line an Acatalectos; the second an Ætiologia of the first; the third, an Acyrologia; the fourth an Epanalepsis of the third; fifth a Diatyposis of beauty; sixth a Diaporesis, of success; seventh a Brachycatalecton; eighth an Ecphonesis of Ecplexis. In short an Emporium could not contain a greater Synchysis of such accidents without Syzygia. I am resolved to forsake the Parnassian Mount, and would advise you to do so too, and attain the mystery of composing Smegma. Think not I make a Mycterismus in mentioning Smegma. No: my Mnemosyne will let me see (unless I have an Amblyopia) your great services, which shall be remembered by

"HASMOT ETCHAORNTT."

The signature to this wonderful composition is nothing but Thomas Chatterton anagramatised, whilst all the mysterious-looking words, as G. V. Le Grice has pointed out, are to be found in Kersey's "Dictionary," 1708 edition, and therein is *the key to the Rowley Manuscripts.*

Almost all the antique words in those manuscripts, as G. V. Le Grice, Professor Skeat, and others have explained, and as any one can see for himself by inspection, are contained in Bayley's and Kersey's dictionaries or Speght's "Chaucer." The few strange exceptions to this rule were words inserted or modified by Chatterton himself, generally to make a rhyme, but sometimes through a misunderstanding of Old English grammatical construction.

Chatterton remained on friendly terms with William Smith to the end of his short life. The two lads exchanged verses, and in 1769 Chatterton wrote impromptu in the presence of this friend some lines on the "Immortality of the Soul." George Pryce

records that the two lads having had a discussion about the immortality of the soul, Chatterton was inspired there and then to write the following verses :—

Say, O my soul, if not allowed to be
Immortal whence the mystery we see
Day after day, and hour after hour,
But to proclaim its never-ceasing power?
If not immortal then our thoughts of thee
Are visions but of non-futurity.
Why do we live to feel of pain on pain,
If, in the midst of hope, we hope in vain?

Perish the thought in night's eternal shade
To live then die, man was not only made.
There's yet an awful something else remains
Either to lessen or increase our pains.
Whate'er it be, whate'er man's future fate,
Nature proclaims there is another state
Of woe or bliss. . . .
. . . . . .
Oh! may our portion in that world above,
Eternal Fountain of Eternal Love,
Be crowned with peace that bids the sinner live;
With praise to Him who only can forgive—
Blot out the stains and errors of our youth;
Whose smile is mercy, and whose word is truth.

At different times varying phases of thought would sway the young poet's mind. At one moment full of hope and faith, he would speak or write accordingly, and at another his words or works would portray the sharpest sarcasm or the deepest despair. Much of his writing was impromptu: dashed off as the spirit moved him, and never intended for publicity, or,

at all events, for further inspection than that of one pair of eyes beyond his own.

One way of dealing with an insolvable mystery is portrayed by the above verses, and in another set addressed to Smith, at an apparently later period, a similar problem is dealt with in an entirely different manner; thus in "The Defence," addressed to the same friend, on December 25, 1769, he writes:—

> No more, dear Smith, the hacknied tale renew;
> I own their censure, I approve it too.
> For how can idiots, destitute of thought,
> Conceive or estimate, but as they're taught?
>
> . . . . .
>
> If in myself I think my notions just
> The church and all her arguments are dust.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Happy the man whose reason bids him see
> Mankind are by the state of nature free;
> Who, thinking for himself, despises those
> That would upon his better sense impose;
> Is to himself the minister of God,
> Nor treads the path where Athanasius trod,
> Happy (if mortals can be) is the man,
> Who, not by priest but Reason, rules his span,
>
> . . . . .
>
> Can the Eternal Justice pleased receive,
> The prayers of those who, ignorant, believe?
>
> . . . . .
>
> But why must Chatterton selected sit
> The butt of every critic's little wit?
> Am I alone for ever in a crime,
> Nonsense in prose or blasphemy in rhyme?

Then adverting to what is said, or he fancies is,

about his own compositions, he proceeds to quote the critic :—

> Besides the author, 'faith,' tis something odd,
> Commends a reverential awe of God.
> Read but another fancy of his brain,
> He's atheistical in every strain ;

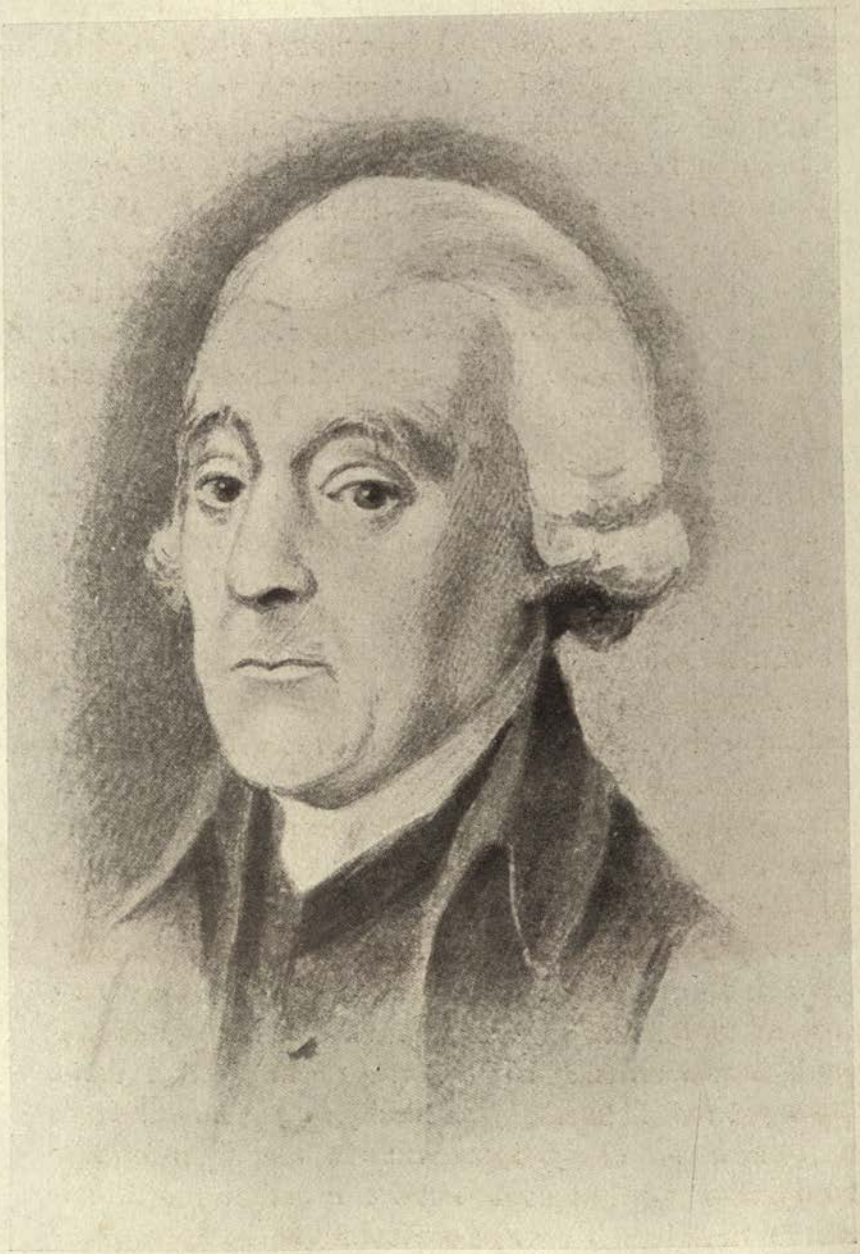
And then answering the supposed accusation says—

> Fallacious is the charge—'tis all a lie,
> As to my reason I can testify,
> I own a God, immortal, boundless, wise,
> Who bids our glories of creation rise
>
> . . . . .
>
> Why then, dear Smith, since doctors disagree,
> Their notions are not oracles to me.
> What I think right I ever will pursue,
> And leave you liberty to do so too.

Whether these lines were given to Smith, or not, matters little, as Chatterton evidently sometimes used a friend's name as a peg whereon to hang his fancies or theories. It may be remarked that Smith, or "Uncle Bendy," as he was called by his relatives, had a chequered career, and lived to a good old age, but never could be induced to believe that his boyhood's friend was the author of the Rowley Manuscripts. Often when his nephews would question him on the subject, he would exclaim, "No, no! Tom was a very clever fellow, but he could not write that."

Chatterton had never told him that he had written the Rowley poems, and not to have trusted him, his "bosom friend" would have been an insult to his

friendship. In a short account of Smith, which appeared in 1836, in which year he died on January 8th, aged eighty-nine, it records that when his attention was drawn to Southey and Cottle's edition of Chatterton's works, assigning the Rowley pieces to his friend's pen, Smith only gave a sceptical shake of the head, and exclaimed, "He, Sir! What Tom Chatterton write Rowley's poems? No, Sir, he was incapable of so doing! He no more wrote them than I did!"



GEORGE SYMES CATCOTT.

After the portrait by E. Bird, R.A., the property of Harry Goodwin Rooth, Esq.

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## CHAPTER VII

### BRISTOL ELDERS

SHORTLY after the publication of his paper in *Farley's Journal*, concerning the opening of the "Old Bridge" at Bristol, Chatterton made the acquaintance of a Mr. George Symes Catcott, described by Dr. Gregory, the poet's first biographer, as "a gentleman of an inquisitive turn and fond of reading." Chatterton's introduction to George Catcott was brought about by the lad's associate, William Smith, who was related to Catcott. Knowing his relative's love of antique literature, Smith informed him, as the two were walking together in Redcliff Church, that several pieces of ancient poetry had been discovered in that building and were in the possession of a young person with whom he was acquainted. Catcott desired to see these manuscripts, and was speedily introduced to the "young person," who was, of course, Thomas Chatterton. At this interview Catcott obtained from the youth, "without any reward," "The Bristowe Tragedie," and some other poetical pieces.

As this George Catcott had much to do with Chatterton, and still more with the Rowley papers,

some information about him will be acceptable. Although the partner of Burgum, a pewterer, he was a man of some education and well connected. He was a son of the Rev. Alexander S. Catcott, a descendant of Alderman Whitson, founder of the Red Maids School, at Bristol, master of the Bristol Grammar School, Rector of St. Stephen's of that city, and a good Hebrew scholar, no slight distinction in those days. Another of this clergyman's sons was the Rev. Alexander Catcott, Vicar of Temple Church, Bristol, and author of a "Treatise on the Deluge."

Besides making himself notorious by the performance of certain mad-headed actions, George Catcott was known as having a collection of books, none of which, as he boasted, was less than a hundred years old. His favourite author was Charles the First, whose reputed works he is said to have learnt by heart, and, according to one of his contemporaries, very seldom went out without them in his pocket. Richard Smith junior, a surgeon, who spared no one in his sarcasm, not even his own relatives, in describing George Catcott, whose nephew he was, says, "The fame of Rowley has been reflected on his 'Midwife,' as my uncle had been nicknamed, and it was supposed that he must be 'a most learned Theban,' which was a great mistake, for he had small Latin and no Greek. In fact, he was nothing more than a simple, plain, single-headed, honest man."

The nephew's statement is given for what it is worth, but it has not been accepted by writers on Chatterton as as entirely accurate description of the uncle's character. In addition to his love of old

books, and an unquenchable thirst for notoriety, George Catcott, by his parsimonious treatment of the young poet and, subsequently, of the lad's mother, proved that in his eagerness for the acquisition of riches he was not over-scrupulous about the method of obtaining them. Of course it was from a desire to increase his worldly possessions that he entered into partnership with Burgum, but it is not likely that he had any knowledge of the pewtering business, or, indeed, ever attained any skill in it. The firm of Burgum and Catcott carried on business at the Port of Bristol Bridge, in the parish of St. Nicholas, within the city walls boundary. Amongst the schemes for advertising their trade, or of acquiring that notoriety of which he was so ambitious, some of Catcott's ways were singularly original.

On the 20th of June, 1767, when the new bridge was still in the course of construction, and a passage over the incompleted structure could only be made by means of some planks laid loosely over the arches, the vainglorious Catcott, between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, mounted on horseback, rode over the risky roadway. He obtained permission to attempt this dangerous feat by the payment of a toll of five guineas, in order to gain the distinction, such as it was, of having been the first person to make the passage of the new bridge.

Upon another occasion, about two years later, the pewterer is said to have paid a fee of the same amount to be allowed to ascend by means of a rope, at no little risk to his life, to the top of the newly erected steeple of St. Nicholas' Church, to 205

feet above the ground, to deposit within the head-stone, in a cavity made for the purpose, two pewter plates with inscriptions commemorating his foolhardy act.

Ever ready to seize upon the salient traits of any known or notorious person for the exercise of his satiric pen, Chatterton naturally deemed the pewterer's foolish actions fit theme for castigation. In his lines on "Happiness" he thus refers to them and their doer :—

Catcott is very fond of talk and fame—
His wish, a perpetuity of name;
Which to procure, a pewter altar's made
To bear his name and signify his trade;
In pomp burlesqued the rising spire to head,
To tell futurity a pewterer's dead.
Incomparable Catcott, still pursue
The seeming happiness thou hast in view:
Unfinished chimnies, gaping spires complete,
Eternal fame on oval dishes beat;
Ride four inch bridges, clouded turrets climb,
And bravely die—to live in after time.
Horrid idea! If on the rolls of fame
The twentieth century only find thy name,
Unnoticed this, in prose or tagging (flower?),
He left his dinner to ascend the tower!
Then, what avails thy anxious spitting pain?
Thy laugh provoking labours are in vain.
On matrimonial pewter set thy hand;
Hammer with every power thou canst command;
Stamp thy whole self, original as 'tis,
To propagate thy whimsies, name, and phiz—
Then, when the tottering spires or chimnies fall,
A Catcott shall remain admired by all.

The pewterer did not act upon the pert young

poet's suggestion, and remained a bachelor till the end of his career. References to some local and fleeting things in these verses may not be comprehendable, but that to riding "four inch bridges" is, of course, a remembrance of "Poor Tom" in "King Lear."

During the early interviews this eccentric individual had with Chatterton, the young poet, so the pewterer averred, mentioned the names of most of the pieces afterwards published as the Rowley poems and, indeed, gave him several of them, evidently without fee or reward. Eventually, finding that no recompense of any kind followed the presentation of these writings, and that there was little or no prospect of them being made public through that channel, Chatterton became more chary of his treasures, and for the future Catcott rarely, and only with difficulty, was able to obtain any more Rowleys, "originals" or copies.

If Chatterton were sometimes severely sarcastic in his references to George Catcott it is scarcely to be wondered at, seeing that the pewterer had acquired nearly the whole of the Rowley poems from him as gifts. Certainly, the public is indebted to Catcott for the erstwhile preservation of the literary treasures, but when the terms on which he obtained them from the owner are remembered all honest folks must thrill with indignation. Not contented with what he obtained from Chatterton during his life, after his death he contrived to get from the boy's poor mother a further supply of his documents, ultimately, under pressure, rewarding her with the miserable sum of

five guineas. For a long time he offered the manuscripts, as the genuine works of Rowley, from one probable purchaser to another, until, finally, he disposed of the best part of the collection to Messrs. Payne & Son, the London booksellers, for the price of fifty pounds, not one-twentieth of their present pecuniary value as holographs only. The only time Chatterton is known to have suggested to George Catcott that he had a claim on him for the poetical treasures he had made him custodian of was by the following hint :—

MR. G. CATCOTT,
*To the Executors of T. Rowley.* *Dr.*

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| To the pleasure received in reading his historic works ... ... ... ... | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| To the pleasure received in reading his poetic works ... ... ... ... | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| | £10 | 10 | 0 |

The unfortunate creditor never had the satisfaction of receipting the account.

Chatterton's hope of seeing his productions put before the public by the pewterer being frustrated, and seeing that the man's patronage was worthless, he informed him, in reply to his persistent pressure for more "Rowleys," that he had destroyed the remainder of them. It is certain that some he said he had possessed, and which there is good reason to believe had existed, were never seen as far as is now known. One of these missing pieces was the tragedy of "The Apostate," a fragment of which

Barrett, the surgeon, did obtain, but of that only a few lines have been preserved. The theme of this drama, the conversion of a Christian to the Jewish faith, was one seemingly suitable for a being of Chatterton's temperament, and the loss of the work is greatly to be regretted.

Another of the missing works, the tragedy of "Goddwyn," there is some reason for deeming to have been completed. Such fragments as have been preserved of this drama render it probable that it would have been regarded as its author's masterpiece. One of these fragments contains the much admired, far famed invocation to Freedom, or "Ode to Liberty," as it is termed in the manuscript. It is supposed to be chanted by "Chorus," that time-honoured personage of the ancient stage, as a kind of response to Edward the Confessor's words in favour of the Normans, and is in these words:—

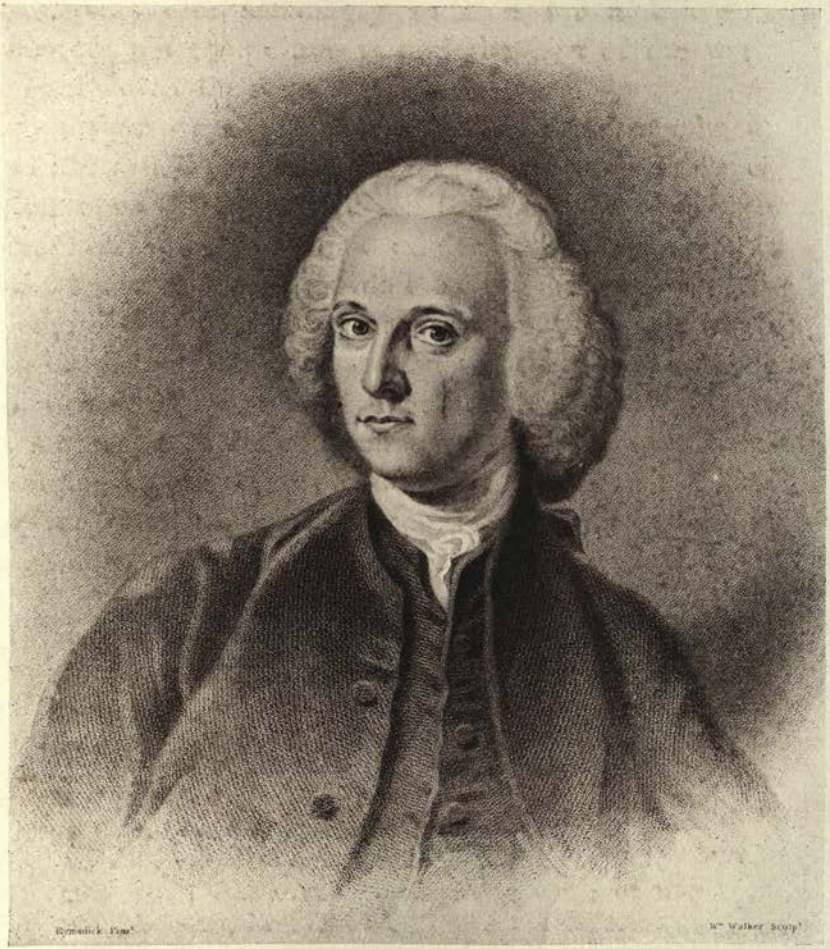
When Freedom, drest in blood-stained vest,
To every Knight her war song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread;
A gory anlace[1] by her hung.
She danced on the heath;
She heard the voice of death.
Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale;[2]
She heard onflemed[3] the shrieking voice of woe
And sadness, in the owlet, shake the dale.
She shook the pointed spear,
On high she raised her shield,
Her foemen all appear,
And fly along the field,

[1] Sword. [2] Freeze. [3] Undismayed.

Power, with head upreaching to the skies,
His spear a sunbeam, and his shield a star,
Alike two flaming meteors roll his eyes,
Stamps with his iron feet and sounds to war.
She sits upon a rock
She bends before his spear,
She rises from the shock,
Wielding her own in air;
Strong as the thunder doth she drive it on,
Skill closely shrouded, guides it to his crown,
His long sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone,
He falls, and falling rolleth thousands down.
War, gore-faced War, by envy armed, asist (arose),
His fiery helmet, shaking to the air,
Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist.

. . . . . .

Amongst George Catcott's acquaintances was a Mr. William Barrett, a surgeon of some local repute. This man had long been collecting material for a "History of Bristol," and the pewterer was not slow in informing him of the discovery of the Rowley Manuscripts. The surgeon was anxious to share in the plunder, and at his request Catcott introduced Chatterton to him. Sir Herbert Croft, whose memory must not be too implicitly relied upon, reports Barrett as saying that he often used to send for Chatterton "from the Charity School, which is close to his house, and differ from him in opinion, on purpose to make him earnest, and to see how wonderfully his eye would strike fire, kindle and blaze up," but as all trustworthy witnesses, including the poet's relatives and earliest biographers, as well as George Catcott, assert that the surgeon did not know the lad until he was introduced by the pewterer,



WILLIAM BARRETT.

From an engraving after portrait by Rymsdick.

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after the appearance of his first Rowley paper about the "Newe Bridge," in *Felix Farley's Journal* for October, 1768, it is certain that for "the Charity School" in Croft's account should be read "Lambert's office."

As soon as Barrett heard of Chatterton being in possession of these ancient Bristolian manuscripts he sought to enlist him in his service, and after Catcott had brought the two together they worked in many respects in conjunction. Consequent upon making such influential acquaintances for a youth in his position, Chatterton's ambition, as his sister, Mrs. Newton, records, increased daily, and "when in spirits he would enjoy his rising fame," and "confident of advancement he would promise my mother and me should be partakers of his success."

Barrett possessed a library well stocked with just the class of books, pamphlets, and old records Chatterton required for the construction of his Rowley romance. To obtain an inspection of this material and receive the advice and assistance of an educated man, an experienced antiquary, who could revise his grammar, deciper ancient Latin inscriptions, and translate old French mottoes, was a desideratum; but it called for something in return. Barrett was not the man to give anything for nothing. What had the lad to give in return? Chatterton was poor, but a poet, living with and amid the creations of his own busy brain: buoyed with the poet's eternal hope of some day seeing the puppets he had brought into being achieve public notice and consequently immortality. Barrett

was also ambitious. He desired to become known and remembered as the historian of the city of Bristol. He needed material for the manufacture of his grand work. Where was it to be obtained?

Chatterton readily undertook to supply what the surgeon wanted. It was really a contract; but the young poet was poor and his patron was well off. Ancient records were wanted, and every spare hour devoted to the fabrication of old deeds, plans, histories, drawings, and descriptions of ecclesiastical buildings was robbed from the time consecrated to the creation of poems. As a slight recompense, in addition to verbal information and advice, Barrett may have occasionally supplied a coin of the realm, if only for the purchase of materials for the copies, or "transcripts," as the Rowleyites term the Chatterton manuscripts, but from what is known of the man the amount must have been as small as circumstances would permit.

It may be deemed asserting too much to declare positively that Barrett knew how these Rowley Manuscripts were produced, but it is certain that he must have had the very strongest suspicions, and that for fear a censorious public, gauging them by their true character, would suggest complicity, he carefully disclaimed any responsibility for their authenticity, and offered them to "the judicious and candid reader to form his own opinion." He not only indicated to his youthful confederate, however, what records he required, but when he obtained what he had asked for he garbled and revised the spelling, so as to give it a more antiquated appearance than it already

possessed. Evidence of the way in which he coached up the lad with his "transcripts," and saved him from spoiling his "Rowleys" by making palpable mistakes, is shown by a statement made by the Rev. S. Seyer in his Chattertonian memoranda. The historian relates that when the youth first mentioned to Barrett his earliest known Rowley poem, now commonly miscalled "The Bristowe Tragedie," he said he had got "The Execution of Sir C. Brandon." The surgeon said that was impossible, as Sir C. Brandon lived long after Rowley's time. Chatterton persisted that the poem was in Rowley's writing, but when he next called and produced his transcript, it was of "The Execution of Sir C. Bawdin," which Mr. Barrett said was the right name. All of these transpired matters go to prove that it was not merely a boy's plot the public had to disentangle, but a conspiracy of two, one of whom was an educated man of the world.

People term Chatterton's intimacy with Barrett a fortunate friendship for the lad, but in more respects than one it appears to have been a most unlucky venture for him. The time he could have spent in the composition of immortal poems had to be wasted in the fabrication of worthless documents for the antiquary's requirements. In Barrett's library there were many works on medical subjects unsuitable for a lad of Chatterton's age and temperament, and these works, unearthed by him, or, as is likely, placed at his disposal by the surgeon, who did give him some instruction in surgery, exercised a pernicious influence upon his mind.

It would have been much better for Chatterton's happiness and reputation had he never known Barrett or his books. The conversation the already too precocious lad had to listen to and doubtless take part in at the surgeon's destroyed the last remnants of his boyish innocence and faith; the very superficial medical knowledge he obtained there not only vitiated the tone of his writings but eventually caused him to build his last hope upon turning that knowledge to account, whilst Barrett's refusal to help him to do so, perhaps from interested motives, precipitated, even if it did not cause, the final tragedy.

It must be remembered that almost all which is *publicly* known of the intercourse between the rich surgeon and the poor apprentice boy is from information furnished by the former. What Barrett knew and what he chose to tell the world may have been very different things. The youth was dead when the surgeon spoke, and George Catcott, the only person who could have thrown any light on the matter, was to some extent concerned in the conspiracy, and had to keep silent. What proof is there that the skilled surgeon, the experienced man of the world, was the simple, credulous, unsuspicious dolt biographers represent him to have been, and the inexperienced boy poet the crafty, mercenary impostor they assume him to have been? Barrett's use of the Rowley Manuscripts, in the work he had obtained them for, is pointed to as a proof of his credulity, but what he got from Chatterton was useful for his purpose in the construction of his very heavily subscribed for "History of Bristol."

What did the impecunious Chatterton receive for his contributions to that work?

That Barrett was no blinded fool and no credulous benefactor is shown by all his dealings with the lad. His statement about differing from him in opinion, purposely to make him earnest and to see how wonderfully his eye would flash and kindle, is the remark of a shrewd, observant professional man; whilst his repeated although unsuccessful attempts to induce the lad to take intoxicating drinks, as recorded in Seyer's memoranda, was not the behaviour of a friend or of a benefactor.

It should be emphasised in connection with these remarks that Barrett's aid and collaboration in some of the Chattertonian manuscripts is proved by their existence. In the "De Bergham" pedigree, for instance, of which production more will have to be said later on, the Latin paragraphs are translated by the surgeon; pretty good evidence that he was conniving at that fabrication with his juvenile accomplice; and if he connived at one, why not at all? It has been shown that he revised and attempted by orthographical emendations, as did George Catcott also, to give a more antique appearance to the "transcripts" than they bore when received from Chatterton, and the only thing doubtful is how far the revision went. What the surgeon wanted the lad supplied. If not the principal culprit Barrett was certainly an accessory before and after the deed.

It is very probable that the surgeon originally suggested Chatterton's application to Walpole: that he aided and advised him in the affair is certain, as

the first draft of a letter on the subject, in Barrett's handwriting, for the lad to send to the patroniser of Macpherson of Ossian fame, is preserved in the British Museum. If the letter which was finally sent was not entirely drafted by Barrett, it seems certain that he was consulted about it and approved of its contents. Of course it is clear that he knew of the whole correspondence with Walpole and of its result, as it was left in his possession. Chatterton was grateful to the surgeon for surgical and other instruction, as he acknowledges in his "Will"—

> He has my thanks sincere
> For all the little knowledge I had here.

If the lad learnt later on to gauge the man's true character he forbore to let the world know the fact. It may have been that "honour among thieves" feeling which restrained him, but in his scathing, sarcastic piece, "The Exhibition" (see Appendix B), he treats Barrett, and him only, with respect, his only reference to him being—

> Barrett arose and with a thundering air,
> Stretched out his arm, and dignified the chair.

There are good reasons for deeming the scurrilous "Exhibition" owed its origin to the surgeon's information, in which case Chatterton was bound to let him off gently.

It was suggested by Wilson that the poet, in his lines on "Happiness," satirised Barrett under the pseudonym of "Pulvis," but that appears to have

been a misunderstanding on the biographer's part. "Pulvis" is described as a doctor of medicine, and the surgeon did not acquire the medical degree of doctor; nor does the satire suit the man in other respects.

Most of the documents Barrett obtained from Chatterton were presumably records of castles, churches, and other historically noted buildings such as were specially required for his projected "History of Bristol," but he received with them a few of the Rowley poems, including "The Parliament of Sprites" and the two fragmentary pieces on "The Battle of Hastings." Transcripts of some of these were also given to George Catcott. The antiquary was desirous of including these pieces in his wonderful history, whilst the pewterer wished to dispose of all the metrical pieces available in one lot. There was some friction between the two confederates over the matter, but eventually they settled their differences by a division of the spoil: the surgeon retained "The Parliament of Sprites" and a few shorter pieces, some of which have disappeared altogether, whilst Catcott obtained the disposal of the others. The longest poem reserved for the topographical work duly appeared therein as "An Enterlude Wroten bie T. Rowlaie and J. Iscam," Iscam being one of the several poets unknown outside the Rowley anthology. The original manuscript of this piece, containing interesting and suggestive glossarial notes by Chatterton, is now in the British Museum.

The first Chatterton poem on "The Battle of Hastings," a fragment given to Barrett, was endorsed,

"Wrote by Turgot, the Monk, a Saxon, in the *tenth* century, and translated by Thomas Rowlie, parish preeste of St. Johns in the city of Bristol in the year 1465," thus ignoring or overlooking the fact that the battle described was not fought until the latter half of the eleventh century. Chatterton further endorses this manuscript thus: "*The remainder of the poem I have not been happy enough to meet with.*" This sentence calls for special notice from the fact that when Barrett pressed him for the original parchment on which the poem was supposed to be written, Chatterton confessed that he had written the poem himself for a friend. He stated that he had another piece on the same subject, which was an original, and that he would bring that to Barrett. After some considerable time, sufficient to have enabled him to compose it, the lad presented the antiquary with a second fragmentary metrical "Battle of Hastings," "by Turgotus, translated by Rowlie for W. Canynge, Esq." As this second version was, also, incomplete, Barrett continually urged him to bring the conclusion, which he did ultimately. The second "Battle of Hastings" was in every respect equal to the first, and was composed in a somewhat similar adaptation of the Spenserian metre which Chatterton had made. The construction of both versions was equally modern, but the orthography was in both cases the pseudo-antique Rowleyese.

It would be an insult to common sense to believe that after this disclosure Barrett did not comprehend the truth. All sensible persons must admit that he could not have been the educated, experienced pro-

HENRY BURGUM.

From an old engraving after the portrait by T. Beach.

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fessional man of the world he was regarded as if he could ignore the evidence and, as a recent biographer asserts, could accept the second version of the poem, as well as a second concluding portion of that, without suspicion of its authorship. Undoubtedly, Barrett comprehended the facts, but it was to his interest to ignore them. To accept the poems as by Chatterton was to destroy the authenticity of a large and most interesting portion of his forthcoming "History of Bristol."

Amongst Chatterton's older associates in his native city was Henry Burgum, a native of Gloucester and partner of George Catcott in the pewtering business. He was in very humble circumstances when he first reached Bristol, but appears to have received some elementary education there, probably at one of Colston's institutions, although, notwithstanding the positive assertions of Wilson and his followers, he was not a pupil at Colston's Hospital. Burgum was not destitute of laudable ambition, and is said by Croft to have taught himself Latin and Greek, although from what is known of the man this seems very improbable. Certainly he had some musical knowledge, and during Chatterton's days was supposed to be wealthy. The young poet says of him—

> The man has credit and is great on 'Change.

Elsewhere, whilst commending him for some things, Chatterton is sarcastic about his educational deficiencies, probably only echoing, as was his wont, what he heard in the Barrett and Catcott cliques.

Later on, when the lad learned to see deeper into the minds of men, he seems to have repented somewhat of his satirical remarks on the pewterer, and in various places, such as in these lines from "Kew Gardens," defended him from his ill-natured critics :—

> Burgum wants learning—all the lettered throng
> Banter his English in a Latin song.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Ye sage Broughtonian,[1] self-sufficient fools,
> Is this the boasted justice of your schools?
> Burgum has parts, parts which will set aside
> The laboured acquisitions of your pride.
> Uncultivated now his genius lies,
> Instruction sees his latent talents rise;
> His gold is bullion, yours debased with brass,
> Impressed with Folly's head to make it pass.
> But Burgum swears so loud, so indiscreet,
> His thunders echo through the listening street.
> Ye rigid Christians, formally severe,
> Blind to his charities, his oaths you hear;
> Observe his actions—calumny must own
> A noble soul is in these actions shown:
> Though dark this bright original you paint,
> I'd rather be a Burgum than a saint.

With some slight variations the above lines reappear in Chatterton's "Epistle to the Reverend Mr. Catcott," but in that poem Burgum's name is omitted, a blank being left as if the author had doubts about using it.

Whatever Burgum's knowledge or ability in other

[1] The Rev. Thomas Broughton, Vicar of St. Mary Redcliff, is said to have been a friend and associate of Chatterton at one time.

matters may have been, for music he does appear to have had not only taste, but to have incurred no inconsiderable expense in indulging it. Sets of music-books for concerts, with each volume bound in the most expensive manner in red morocco and stamped "Henry Burgum" in gold letters on the sides, have been purchased by collectors, and it has been suggested that the books were for a musical club which the pewterer entertained at his own house.

Tovey, the historian of Colston, furnishes an account of the "Grateful Society," established in 1758, in memory of the founder of Colston's Hospital, and intended for benevolent purposes only, differing from other Colstonian institutions "in not blending the elements of party feeling with the pure spirit of charity." Of this society it is recorded, and the fact fortifies the good opinion Chatterton had formed of him, that Henry Burgum was President for 1766.

Henry Burgum, if not an educated man, aspired to be regarded as one, and, apparently, those men of position in their professions, whose society he sought, disliked him, "the presumptuous vulgar fellow" as Richard Smith called him, and envied him for his supposed success. Some or one of them was, probably, not above suggesting to Chatterton that the man was a good subject for exercising his talents upon, and the shrewd lad, speedily and correctly gauging the foibles of the pewterer, laid his plans accordingly.

Writing in the 1803 edition of Chatterton's works, Joseph Cottle, an object of Byron's sarcasm, gives a reasonable account of the history of the "De

Burgham Pedigree," but in again relating the narrative many years later he forgets or ignores his former story and gives full play to his imagination. His later, mythical tale is the one biographers appear fondest of. In his account in 1803 Cottle states that Chatterton, being under some slight pecuniary obligations to Burgum, called on him one day, *when he was about sixteen years of age* (*i.e.*, about November, 1768), and told him that he had his (Burgum's) pedigree at home, and informed him that he was allied to many distinguished families. Naturally Burgum desired to see this pedigree, and a few days later Chatterton presented him with it, and, it is suggested, the following lines show that the lad's reward was five shillings:—

> . . . What would Burgum give to get a name,
> And snatch his blundering dialect from shame!
> What would he give to hand his memory down
> To time's remotest boundary? A crown!

Many years after his first statement Joseph Cottle, whose memory instead of being blunted by age would seem to have been spurred up to emulate the legendary deeds of nearly all writers on Chatterton, furnishes his new generation of readers with the following fable. Referring the incident to far too early a period in the poet's life, and relating it with an amount of circumstantiality as if it had happened yesterday, and the conversational part had been taken down on the spot by some system of stenography, Cottle, after describing Burgum as a vain, credulous man, fond of notoriety, who had often

noticed Chatterton as an acute blue-coat boy, fond of talking about books, and to whom he had occasionally given a sixpence, proceeds with his story thus :—

> One Saturday afternoon, Chatterton called on Mr. Burgham in his blue-coat habiliments, and with unusual solemnity, told him that he had made a discovery.
>
> "What?" said Mr. B. eagerly.
>
> "Why," replied the young bard, "that you are related in lineal descent to some of the first nobles of the land."
>
> "I did not know it, Tom," was Mr. Burgham's reply.
>
> "Perhaps not," rejoined Chatterton, "but amongst the treasures which I have obtained from Redcliff Church Muniment Room, I have found *your* pedigree, clearly traced from a very remote period."
>
> "Let me see it," said Mr. Burgham, and two or three days afterwards the boy presented him with the first portion of the document, with the De Burgham arms, laboriously painted on parchment, and bearing all the genuine marks of antiquity.

And this is the way biography is told! This by the man whose honest gall was stirred by the manner in which Barrett and George Catcott had manipulated Chatterton's manuscripts! It is needless to continue Cottle's romancing account, which has been followed *verbatim* by many biographers, suffice to say that the pedigree, given to the pewterer by Chatterton, is now in the British Museum, and is one of the most curious specimens of the Rowley Manuscripts, no more or less genuine than any of them. It is written in an ordinary school copybook, and is headed: "An account of the Family of the De Burghams, from the Norman Conquest to this time; collected from original records, Tournament

Rolls, and the Heralds of March and Garter Records, by T. Chatterton." The Rowley records being incomplete, according to the lad's account, he had had to resort to other authorities in order to supply the deficiencies.

Poor as was the recompense awarded by the pewterer for the documentary evidence of his ancestral kinship with such notabilities as the Earls of Northumberland, Northampton, and Huntingdon, it was sufficient to incite Chatterton to manufacture a "Continuation," in a second copybook, bringing the family records down to the days of James II., nearer than which time it might have been risky to trace them. Burgum's generosity continued, and he rewarded Chatterton with a second five shillings for this further proof of the ancestral dignity of his family. The lad's feelings were suppressed for the time, but in his so-called "Will," written many months later, he expressed in words, what he had hitherto only thought, in the lines already quoted.

It is scarcely necessary to say that this pedigree, although partially compiled from real authorities with references to historical personages, was an entire fabrication, as far as it related to any known ancestors of the pewterer. There was really a de Bergham family which had flourished in Northumberland for centuries, and there were some such heraldic works and documents as Chatterton recites, but the whole account which his deft pen and shrewd brain made quite genuine-looking enough for a man of Burgum's calibre was entirely spurious. It may be pointed out that the various coats-of-arms he drew

to illustrate the Bergham alliances were wrong, and, indeed, impossible in their details, and must have been executed before he had been long under the guidance of his companion, Thomas Palmer, in such matters. In order to explain how the noble North Country family of de Berghams had migrated to the west and had fallen in the social scale down to the humble, southern Burgums, the poet makes a John Burgham, Esq., sell his estates in the northern counties and purchase others in Gloucestershire. His grandson spent "his fortune in the vain but magnanimous endeavour to surpass all the nobles of the land" in magnificent show, at the fêtes held in the honour of Queen Elizabeth's accession. Henceforth the family dwindled into insignificance.

What after all may be deemed the most noteworthy point in connection with this fabricated pedigree is that Chatterton introduced into the second part, or "Continuation," one of his own mediæval poems, as found amongst the Rowley Manuscripts. "The Romaunte of the Cnyghte," as he styled it, is produced as the composition of John de Burgham, with the remark, "To give you an idea of the poetry of the age, take the following piece wrote by him about 1320." As the pewterer was scarcely likely to be able to read the lines, or even the title to them, in their Rowleyese dialect, Chatterton kindly furnished a translation into modern English, as "The Romance of the Knight." The pseudo-Rowley text is far finer than the translation, which probably was the original version, but "The Romance of the Knight" is not without notable lines. It was apparently written before the

glow of boyhood, with its faith in Knight-Errantry still a vital force, had faded. He speaks of "the worthy Knight" upon "a foaming steed," with "his sword of giant make," going forth "to seek for glory and renown." Unhappily when all else is fresh and pure two discordant lines are inserted, as if by an afterthought, or in after days:—

> Women and cats, if you compulsion use,
> The pleasure which they die for will refuse.

It has already been pointed out that Barrett aided in the production of the de Burgham pedigree in so far that he translated the Latin epitaphs and the old French mottoes used in it, as well as various sentences in those languages, the whole of which are still in existence in the surgeon's handwriting. Surely this fact must have been made known to the pewterer, and must have satisfied him as to the authenticity of the documents.

Although Burgum lived in good style and was deemed to be wealthy, he ultimately failed in business. His partner, Catcott, was dreadfully enraged and averred the pewterer had ruined him. Catcott's nephew, Richard Smith, after describing Burgum as "a presumptuous, vulgar fellow, who boasted of his ancestors," accuses him of having robbed his partner Catcott of all his fortune, amounting to three thousand pounds. After the failure of the pewtering business Catcott had to accept a minor position in the Bristol Library, given him as "the patron of Chatterton!" What became of Burgum is unknown, but at the

sale of his effects there was sold a fine portrait of him by Simmons, representing him in a Court dress, and holding a music-book. Ultimately this portrait came into the possession of Horace Walpole, who secured everything he could obtain connected with Chatterton, prompted by other motives than admiration for his young correspondent.

George Catcott lived with his brother, the Rev. Alexander Catcott, Vicar of Temple Church, Bristol, in the vicarage close by the fine old church. Soon after he had made the acquaintance of Chatterton, George Catcott presented the young poet to his brother, and for a time Chatterton and the Vicar were on friendly terms. The poet was introduced to, or gradually became acquainted with, several other members of the family, and was received into their circle. There was Thomas Catcott, brother of George, who held an official position in the Bristol Custom House; their sister, who was married to the senior Richard Smith, brother of Chatterton's friend William and of the unfortunate Peter. This sister was mother to the second Richard Smith, who, like his father, was a surgeon. Other relatives and friends were in the circle of Chatterton's acquaintance. "Aunt Martha" took a great liking to the young lad, although Richard Smith records she said he "was a sad wag of a boy, and always upon some joke or another." Ultimately they fell out, and the old lady reprimanding the poet severely for something, he wrote her a letter enclosing her coat-of-arms, surrounded by a garter and surmounted by a floral crest, coloured gules, with the

motto, "The Rose of Virginity." This piece of boyish impudence seems to have cooled the old maiden lady's liking for the lad.

In the meantime, it was not all smooth sailing with the Vicar, whose ideas and ways were as opposite to Chatterton's as it was possible for them to be. At first they had some friendly intercourse, and Chatterton presented the clergyman with an "original Rowley," a romantic history of the Temple Church. This was a scrap of disfigured parchment, about five inches square, with some nearly illegible writing upon it, so that it had to be explained by the inevitable transcript in Chatterton's own handwriting. The original passed into the hands of Barrett, for use in his "History of Bristol," and is now in the British Museum, whilst the copy in Chatterton's calligraphy is preserved in the Temple Church. As with all the Rowley productions which passed through Barrett's hands, the transcript of the manuscript has been greatly revised in the passage. The words have been manipulated in a way to give them what the sapient surgeon deemed a more antique appearance, by doubling many of the consonants and adding a final "e" to many of the suffixes, quite irrespective of their propriety there; even as most of the many pseudo-antiques of that period were treated by their authors, editors, or fabricators.

The Rev. Alexander Catcott, son of the Rev. Alexander Stopford Catcott, master of the Bristol Grammar School, is considered to have been the most highly cultured of Chatterton's Bristol acquaintances. His piety was testified to by John Wesley,

but he was best known to contemporaries by a "Treatise on the Deluge," a work now utterly neglected, and but for Chatterton's references to it almost unknown. It has been declared that the Vicar was noted for his Hebrew scholarship, but that qualification belonged to his father and not to him. The Vicar of Temple Church had a great dislike to poetry, believing, from examples amongst his own relatives, that its tendency was evil. He was greatly annoyed at his brother George wasting his time over the Rowley Manuscripts, and George believed that if the Rowley poems had got into Alexander's hands before their publication he would have destroyed them. Naturally a man with such ideas could not agree for long with one of Chatterton's temperament. The ill-assorted pair soon started squabbling. The poet wrote a versified "Epistle to the Rev. A. Catcott," begun on December 6, 1769, explaining the cause of its composition in the following note:—

*December* 20, 1769.—Mr. Catcott will be pleased to observe that I admire many things in his learned remarks. This poem is an innocent effort of poetical vengeance, as Mr. Catcott has done me the honour to criticise my trifles. I have taken great poetical liberties, and what I dislike in verse possibly deserves my approbation in the plain prose of truth. The many admirers of Mr. Catcott may, on perusal of this, rank me as an enemy: but I am indifferent in all things; I value neither the praise nor the censure of the multitude.

Amid much that was true and to the purpose, and merely satirised in a permissible manner the known foibles of the Vicar and the absurdities of his

"Treatise on the Deluge," there were interwoven strong personalities that the clergyman could not but resent, and was scarcely likely to overlook, especially coming from one so young and, in the Vicar's ideas, so beneath him in education and station. The "Epistle" begins thus forcibly:—

What strange infatuations rule mankind!
How narrow are our prospects, how confined!
With universal vanity possessed,
We fondly think our own ideas best;
Our tottering arguments are ever strong;
We're always self-sufficient in the wrong.
What philosophic sage of pride austere
Can lend conviction an attentive ear?
What pattern of humility and truth
Can bear the jeering ridicule of youth?

. . . . .

As all have intervals of ease and pain,
So all have intervals of being vain:
But some of folly never shift the scene,
Or let one lucid moment intervene.

. . . . .

'Tis not enough you think your system true,
The busy world would have you prove it too.

. . . . .

Would you the honour of a priest mistrust,
An excommunication proves him just.

. . . . .

Could Catcott from his better sense be drawn
To bow the knee to Baal's sacred lawn?

. . . . .

Yet we must reverence sacerdotal black,
And saddle all his faults on nature's back;
But hold, there's solid reason to revere—
His lordship has six thousand pounds a year:

. . .

Whilst the poor curate in his rusty gown
Trudges unnoticed through the dirty town.
If God made order, order never made
These nice distinctions in the preaching trade.

. . . . .

Yet in these horrid forms salvation lives,
These are religion's representatives;
Yet to these idols must we bow the knee.
But sure religion can produce at least
One minister of God—one honest priest.

Search nature o'er, procure me, if you can,
The fancied character, an honest man;
(A man of sense, not honest by constraint,
For fools are canvass, living but in paint).
To Mammon or to Superstition slaves,
All orders of mankind are fools or knaves.

. . . . .

Think for yourself, for all mankind are free:
We need not inspiration how to see.
If Scripture contradictory you find
Be orthodox, and own your senses blind.
How blinded are their optics, who aver,
What inspiration dictates cannot err.
Whence is this boasted inspiration sent,
Which makes us utter truths we never meant?

. . . . .

What Moses tells us might perhaps be true,
As he was learned in all the Egyptians knew,
But to assert that inspiration's given
The copy of philosophy in heaven,
Strikes at religion's root, and fairly fells
The awful terrors of ten thousand hells.

Attentive search the Scriptures, and you'll find
What vulgar errors are with truths combined . .
But if from God one error you admit,
How dubious is the rest of Holy Writ!

Confute with candour, where you can confute,
Reason and arrogance but poorly suit . . .
With modest diffidence new schemes indite,
Be not too positive, though in the right.
What man of sense would value vulgar praise?

. . . . .

Though youthful ladies, who by instinct scan
The Natural Philosophy of Man,
Can every reason of your work repeat,
As sands in Africa retain the heat.

. . . . .

Some may with seeming arguments dispense,
Tickling your vanity to wound your sense.

. . . . .

But my objections may be reckoned weak,
As nothing but my mother tongue I speak;
Else would I ask, by what immortal Power
All Nature was dissolved as in an hour?
How, when the earth acquired a solid state,
And rising mountains saw the waves abate,
Each particle of matter sought its kind,
All in a strata [*sic*] regular combined?
When instantaneously the liquid heap
Hardened to rocks, the barriers of the deep,
Why did not earth unite a stony mass?

. . . . .

'Twas the Eternal's fiat, you reply;
And who will give eternity the lie?
I own the awful truth, that God made all,
And by His fiat worlds and systems fall.

. . . . .

Some fancy God is what we nature call,
Being itself material, all in all;
The fragments of the Deity we own,
Is vulgarly as various matter known.
No agents could assist creation's birth:
We trample on our God, for God is earth.
'Twas past the power of language to confute
This latitudinary attribute.

After all these bewildering theoretical notions, as much intended to display his own deep reading as to refute his reverend friend's want of logic, the lad suddenly pulls himself up, and descending from the heights of philosophical and theological speculations, returns to earth with these more sober thoughts :—

> Restrain, O Muse, thy unaccomplished lines,
> Fling not thy saucy satire at divines ;
> This single truth thy brother bards must tell—
> Thou hast one excellence of railing well.

Another invocation, this time to Learning, and the young poet resumes his assault upon his clerical friend :—

> The man I blame
> Owns no superior in the paths of fame.
> In springs, in mountains, stratas [*sic*], mines and rocks,
> Catcott is every notion orthodox.
> If to think otherwise you claim pretence,
> You're a detested heretic in sense.
> But oh ! how lofty your ideas soar,
> In showing wondering cits the fossil store !
> The ladies are quite ravished, as he tells
> The short adventures of the pretty shells ;
> Miss Biddy sickens to indulge her touch,
> Madam more prudent thinks 'twould seem too much.
> The doors fly open, instantly he draws
> The sparry load, and—wonders of applause.
> The full-dressed lady sees with envying eye
> The sparkle of her diamond pendants die ;
> Sage natural philosophers adore
> The fossil whimsies of the numerous store.
> . . . . .
> Where is the priestly soul of Catcott now ?
> See what a triumph sits upon his brow !

And can the poor applause of things like these,
Whose souls and sentiments are all disease,
Raise little triumphs in a man like you,
Catcott, the foremost of the judging few?

Chatterton winds up his lengthy Epistle by comparing the clergyman's triumphant receptions to view his samples of the structure of the earth with the coarse applause his brother George gets at Llewellin's ale-house from *his* vulgar admirers :—

So at Llewellin's your great brother sits,
The laughter of his tributary wits,
Ruling the noisy multitude with ease,
Empties his pint, and splutters his desires.

Elsewhere the lad refers in similar terms to George Catcott's behaviour in his favourite public-house :—

Or than his wild, antique and spluttering brother
Loves in his ale-house chair to drink and pother.

After this onslaught it is scarcely to be wondered that the Rev. Alexander Catcott had had quite enough of Chatterton and his verses, the trend of which must have fully confirmed his views of the evil influence of poetry. Chatterton's lines are on a par with the best of their style and period and were evidently not intended to be spiteful. The boy thought and acted as a boy, and deemed he was quite within his rights in giving blow for blow, and that, the fight over, they should shake hands and be friends. The parson had begun the contest by his criticism on the poet, who then had his fling at the

parson, and considered both should now forgive and forget. The reverend gentleman, not unnaturally, took a different view of the matter, and henceforth his house was closed to the saucy young lad.

When Chatterton discovered that the insulted priest did not take the lenient view of his sarcastic lines he thought he should have taken, and that his house was no longer open to him, and, probably, heard through third parties the harsh remarks his verses had provoked, he seems to have felt somewhat sore himself, and in some of his hastily written pieces he did not hesitate about giving vent to his feelings. In his poem of "Kew Gardens" are several uncomplimentary references to Alexander Catcott, and in his unpublished piece, "The Exhibition" (see Appendix B, page 297), he returns to the charge, and in still stronger terms :—

> This truth, this mighty truth—if truth can shine
> In the smooth polish of a laboured line—
> Catcott by sad experience testifies ;
> And who shall tell a sabled priest he lies?
> Bred to the juggling of the specious band,
> Predestinated to adorn the land,
> The selfish Catcott ripened to a priest,
> And wore the sable livery of the Beast.
> By birth to prejudice and whim allied,
> And heavy with hereditary pride,
> He modelled pleasure by a fossil rule,
> And spent his youth to prove himself a fool ;
> Buried existence in a lengthened cave,
> And lost in dreams whatever Nature gave.

To the second month's number of the *Town and Country Magazine* for 1770 Chatterton contributed an

elegy entitled "February." It contains some good stanzas, such as:—

> Now infant authors, maddening for renown,
> Extend the plume, and hum about the stage,
> Procure a benefit, amuse the town,
> And proudly glitter in a title-page.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Now Foote, a looking-glass for all mankind,
> Applies his wax to personal defects;
> But leaves untouched the image of the mind,
> His art no mental quality reflects.

We have discovered the manuscript of an earlier draft of this poem and deem it interesting to see how the lad revised and improved some of the lines, and rejected others, before obtaining publication of his work. To reproduce all his corrections and alterations here would be idle labour, but the following cancelled stanzas may be quoted from what was originally styled "An Elegy on the Demise of a Great Genius," the genius in this transcript being "Laurence," although the published version substitutes "Johnson":—

> Ye matrons, happy in the joyous twang
> Which erst the Grecian Bellman, Stentor used,
> No more resound the Patriot's harangue,
> Or tell the world how Loyalty's abused.
>
> When, in this venerable Gothic Hall,
> Where bulky Aldermen at sessions snore,
> A worthy Placeman did on Freedom call—
> Was lost in catcalls, kickt, and heard no more.

> And those, inimitable Bard, whose brain
> Produces every moon its fulsome slime,
> Lament a brother bard in kindred strain;
> And sing his genius in prosaic rhyme.

Very few of his modern or acknowledged effusions were intended for publication, being thrown off in a passing mood of enthusiasm, or annoyance, to satisfy the transient feeling, or to hand over to some person concerned. It is not fair to compare them with the Rowley poems, the carefully embodied visions of his most exalted aspirations, but in the published version of the foregoing elegy is seen a poem corrected and revised for publication.

The absurd way in which Chatterton was ill-treated and misunderstood by his contemporaries is well exemplified by the allusions to him in Bryant's "Observations." In this work the author does not see how it is possible for the Rowley poems to have been written by a charity boy, who cannot refer to "any writer of consequence which [*sic*] he had read," although he admitted the lad "was conversant in [*sic*] Milton, Shakespeare, and Thomson," but "beyond these he does not seem to have aspired." Certainly, this sapient critic admits those who did not deem Chatterton a genius were influenced by the belief that he "had not the least insight into the learned languages," as far as they knew, "through which knowledge is conveyed." "It may be said," Bryant is careful to remark, "that some of these [*i.e.*, judges] were of no rank in life; nor had themselves any pretences to science; . . . they might not be able to comprehend the genius of a Boyle, or a

Newton," yet, in the opinion of Bryant, "we may suppose them to be judges of the abilities of a Charity boy; of one who was upon the same level as themselves." This is logic with a vengeance! What a judgment for "a learned antiquary"! as his contemporaries dubbed him. A charity boy could not be a genius because charity boys did not comprehend one of their own rank being a genius!

The contempt Chatterton had generally for his fellow-citizens is scarcely to be wondered at when the crass stupidity of those he came in contact with is seen. Happily, not all with whom he had dealings were so deficient in common sense and perception as were the majority. Amongst the older associates of the poet in Bristol, who have not yet been referred to, was one who appears to have exercised much influence upon his reasoning faculties, if the bard's various poetic allusions to him may be read literally. This was Michael Clayfield, a distiller.

Soon after the loss of his friend Phillips—that is to say, towards the close of 1769—Chatterton made the acquaintance of Clayfield, who, apparently, was the only disinterested man amongst the lad's grown associates. The poet appears to have introduced himself to Clayfield, according to the tenor of his verses, upon the occasion of Phillips's death, and writes as if he were addressing himself to a friendly protector of the deceased schoolmaster:—

> To Clayfield, long renowned the Muses' friend,
> Presuming on his goodness, this I send;

which "this" refers to one of Chatterton's poems

upon Phillips. Changing his mode of address from the third to the second person, he proceeds :—

> Unknown to you, to Tranquility and Fame,
> In this address perhaps I am to blame,
> This rudeness let necessity excuse,
> A grateful tribute to a shadowed Muse.

Alluding to the dreadful rumour which has reached him of his friend's death, he beseeches the "generous Clayfield" to allay his agony by letting him know the truth, concluding his versified communication of October 30th with the words :—

> Forgive my boldness, think the urgent cause ;
> And who can bind necessity with laws ?
> I end, th' admirer of your noble parts,
> You, friend to genius, sciences, and arts.

This epistle appears to have opened the way to a strong and enduring friendship between Chatterton and Clayfield. Mrs. Newton states that the distiller lent her brother several books on astronomy, and in Clayfield's library the lad was able to read the works of Pope, Thomson, and other poets of his own century. It is true Dr. Glynn, a very doubtful authority on any matter connected with Chatterton, states that when he questioned Clayfield on the subject the distiller, who, if he did converse with Glynn at all, was probably disgusted by the man's language and anxious to get away quickly, informed him that he only remembered lending the lad Martin's "Philosophical Grammar," and a volume of the same writer's philosophy. Be the truth what it may in the matter, Clayfield

certainly appreciated the genius and temperament of his youthful friend, and his kindness elicited several grateful remarks from Chatterton. In his unruly "Epistle to the Rev. A. Catcott" the lad speaks of his views on the clergyman's speculations on the Deluge and structure of the earth as coinciding with those of the distiller :—

> But Clayfield censures, and demonstrates too,
> Your theory is certainly untrue ;
> On reason and Newtonian rules he proves
> How distant your machine from either moves.

Mrs. Newton is scarcely likely to have been mistaken in this matter of the books, as she adds that not only did Mr. Clayfield lend her brother "many books on astronomy," but that Mr. Cator, another Bristol acquaintance of his, "likewise assisted him with books on that subject;" which subject he applied himself to the study of, and made various references to in his latest verses.

It is good evidence of the affectionate esteem in which Clayfield was held by the youth, that in the so-called "Will" of April 14, 1770, the only person besides his own near relatives to whom Chatterton alludes with unalloyed friendliness is the distiller. Of him he says therein, "I leave Mr. Clayfield the sincerest thanks my gratitude can give ; and I will and direct that whatever any person may think the pleasure of reading my works worth, they immediately pay their own valuation to him, since it is then become a lawful debt to me, and to him as my executor in this case."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A PATRON WANTED

FINDING no prospect of getting his Rowley works published through the medium of his Bristol associates, Chatterton determined to seek in London for some one able and willing to assist him. Surely a more appreciative audience could be found in the metropolis than existed in a provincial city? Probably one of his elder acquaintances advised him where to apply. He began his quest by an application to James Dodsley, the well-known bookseller and publisher. On the 21st of December, 1768, he sent him the following tentative communication :—

SIR,—I take this Method to acquaint you, that I can procure copys of several Ancient Poems; and an Interlude, perhaps the oldest dramatic Piece extant; wrote by one Rowley, a Priest in Bristol, who lived in the Reign of Henry VI. and Edward IV. If these Pieces will be of Service to you, at your Command copys shall be sent to you, by

Y^r^ most obedient Serv^t^,

De Be.

Please direct for D. B. to be left with Mr. Tho Chatterton, Redclift Hill, Bristol.

For Mr. J. Dodsley, Bookseller, Pall Mall, London.

It is unknown what reception this communication

received at the hands of Dodsley, and the biographers, not having a reply before them, surmise that none was ever sent. This is most improbable. In a letter of Chatterton's to his relation, Stephens, of Salisbury, quoted later, he says, "My next correspondent of note is Dodsley, whose collection of modern and antique poems are in every library;" and on the 15th of February following the above communication he is found again writing to the publisher, as if in reply to a request for further particulars :—

SIR,—Having intelligence that the Tragedy of "Ælla" was in being, after a long and laborious search, I was so happy as to attain a sight of it. Struck with the beauties of it I endeavoured to obtain a copy to send you: but the present possessor absolutely denies to give me one, unless I give him a Guinea for a consideration. As I am unable to procure such a sum, I made search for another copy, but unsuccessfully. Unwilling such a beauteous Piece should be lost, I have made bold to apply to you:—several Gentlemen of learning who have seen it, join with me in praising it.—I am far from having any mercenary views for myself in this affair, and, was I able, would print it on my own risque. It is a perfect Tragedy, the plot clear, the language spirited, and the Songs (interspersed in it) are flowing, poetical, and elegantly simple. The similes judiciously applied, and though wrote in the reign of Henry VI., not inferior to many of the present age. If I can procure a copy with or without the gratification, it shall immediately be sent to you. The motive that actuates me to do this, is, to convince the World that the Monks (of whom some have so despicable an opinion) were not such blockheads, as generally thought, and that good poetry might be wrote in the dark days of superstition, as well as in these more enlightened ages. An immediate answer will oblige me. I shall not receive your favour as for myself, but as your agent.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

T. CHATTERTON.

PS.—My reason for concealing my name, was lest my Master (who is now out of town) should see my letters and think I neglected his business. .

Direct for me on Redclift Hill.

As a further postscript Chatterton, with reference to the tragedy, enclosed the speech of Ælla to his army, and makes the statement that "the whole contains about one thousand lines." The piece as now printed contains twelve hundred and fifty. He adds, "If it should not suit you, I should be obliged to you if you would calculate the expenses of printing it, as I will endeavour to publish it by subscription on my own account."

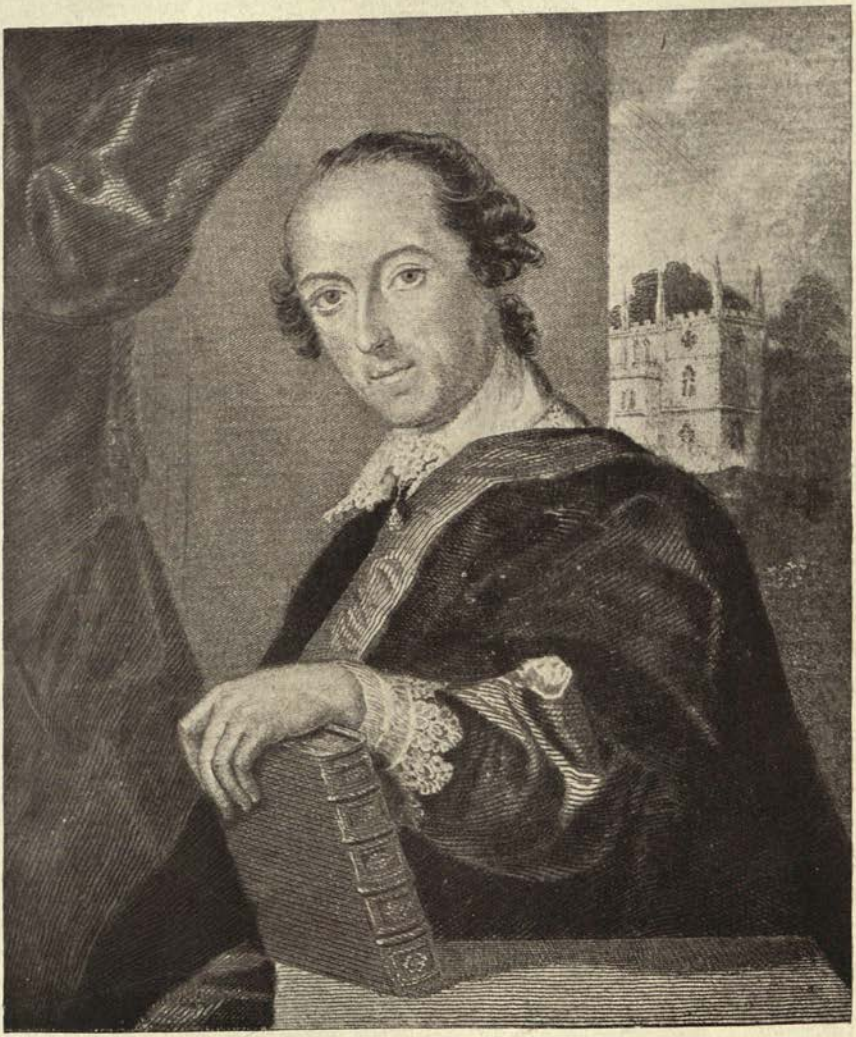
Not only does this letter read as if Dodsley had replied to the poet's first communication, but seems to point to the fact that some intervening correspondence, in which the tragedy of "Ælla" had been mentioned, had taken place. His explanation, apparently, in answer to a question as to why he had used initials only is exceedingly simple and, combined with his confession of his inability to procure the sum of a guinea, proves that, despite all his display of worldly knowledge in some matters, his experience of human nature was sadly defective. That other correspondence occurred, although of an unsatisfactory character, is rendered probable by the fact that Chatterton called upon Dodsley soon after his arrival in London.

With man's usual uncharitableness, it is generally accepted as certain that the boy poet desired to obtain the specified guinea for himself, and little enough it would have been for a copy, an autograph copy, of

his masterpiece, but it has been overlooked that he had presented the manuscript of it to George Catcott, and, knowing what that gentleman's grasping nature was as regards Rowley Manuscripts, it seems more than probable that he it was who required the guinea for a transcript of the whole poem. Why should it be assumed that the lad had the "mercenary views" he repudiated, when it is known that he was most desirous at any risk or cost to get his Rowley works published, and what necessity was there for him to assert, "If I can procure a copy, with or without the gratification, it shall immediately be sent to you," if he did not mean it?

It was a terrible mishap for Chatterton that Dodsley did not undertake the publication of "Ælla," as, take it for all in all, it is the finest of the Rowley compositions, and its issue would have brought the subject of the pseudo-mediæval pieces before the literary world ere it was too late for its author's purpose. Had the publisher applied to been Robert Dodsley, as some of the biographers appear to fancy it was, and as even Chatterton may have thought, the result might have been different. James was the brother of the well-known deceased Robert Dodsley, who had not only been a highly successful dramatist and poetic writer, a successful publisher, the faithful friend of Dr. Johnson, and the editor of a valuable collection of Old English dramas, but had once been only a poor contemned apprentice himself.

The result of all this was that with another disappointment to overshadow his young heart and mind, Chatterton had to seek anew for a patron



HORACE WALPOLE, EARL OF ORFORD.

From an old engraving.

To face p. 161.

to introduce his work to the public. Nothing could be effected by the penniless lad without the aid of some powerful and friendly personage, able as well as willing to assist him. Where was such a person to be found?

In the first edition of his "Anecdotes of Painting" published in 1762, when Chatterton was only ten years old, Horace Walpole had given an account, very inaccurately, it must be confessed, of an ancient manuscript relating to Redcliff Church, a copy of which record had been read before the London Society of Antiquaries by Mr. Theobald, in 1736. This quaint old document gives a description of "a new sepulchre, well gilt with golde and a civer thereto," together with an account of certain curious embellishments, all presented to the church in 1470 by "Maister Canynge." Amongst the adornments are specified:—

*Item*, An image of God Almighty rising out of the same sepulchre, with all the ordinance that 'longeth thereto. . .

*Item*, Thereto 'longeth Heaven, made of timber and stain'd clothes.

*Item*, Hell made of timber, and ironwork thereto, with Divels to the number of 13.

*Item*, 4 Knights armed, keeping the sepulchre, with their weapons in their hands. . . .

*Item*, 4 payr of Angels' wings for 4 Angels, made of timber and well painted.

*Item*, The Fadre, the Crowne and Visage, the Ball with a Cross upon it, well gilt with fine Gould.

*Item*, The Holy Ghosht coming out of Heaven into the sepulchre.

*Item*, 'Longeth to the 4 Angels 4 Chevelers [Wigs?].

There is no doubt that Walpole's "Anecdotes"

came under the notice of Chatterton, and the probability is that Barrett either lent it to him, or drew his attention to it, in connection with his projected "History." The reference to his hero, Canynges, whose name in relation to Redcliff Church must have been much in the lad's mind, could not fail to attact his attention. Whilst he was cogitating upon his failure with Dodsley, and upon whom next to approach, the remembrance or sight of this record would naturally direct his thoughts to Walpole, even if Barrett, who afterwards published Walpole's MS. in his "History of Bristol," had not already called his attention to him.

Here was the very man. Not only was Walpole a man of wealth—and his plurality of sinecures was a scandal even for those days—but he was a literary man with presumedly a taste for mediæval lore, with a knowledge of Redcliff Church and "Maister Canynge," and, if his latest assertion were credible, the author of "The Castle of Otranto," a work of fiction originally offered to a gullible public as "a translation by William Marshall, from an Italian MS. found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the North of England, and printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1520." (*Vide* Appendix C, p. 305.)

Here seemed to be the man Chatterton needed—the man who would sympathise with him in his desire to present the Rowley romance to the world; who, for self-evident reasons, would not be too curious in his investigations into the origin of the work; and who would, doubtless, be glad to have the honour of ushering such a work into publicity and fame.

The result of his inquiry might prove of momentous import to Chatterton and affect his whole future career; it was, consequently, necessary to proceed with circumspection. That he acted entirely upon his own initiative from the first is very doubtful, but that he did consult Barrett during the correspondence is certain. Having settled upon addressing Walpole upon the matter of Rowley, Chatterton wrote the following letter to him:—

SIR,—Being versed a little in Antiquitys, I have met with several curious Manuscripts, among which the following may be of Service to you, in any future Edition of your truly entertaining "Anecdotes of Painting." In correcting the mistakes (if any) in the Notes, you will greatly oblige,

Your most humble Servant,
THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Bristol, March 25th, Corn Street.

Enclosed in this short preliminary communication was a lengthy and curious manuscript on "The Ryse of Peyncteynge yn Englande, wroten by T. Rowleie, 1469, for Mastre Canynge." There is no need to reprint this strange history of English painting from the time of the ancient "Brytonnes," who "dyd depycte themselves, yn sondrie wyse, of the fourmes of the Sonne and Moone wythe the hearbe Woade," down to the days of a man, unknown to history, who painted the walls of Master Canynges's house, "where bee the Councilmen at dinner"; "a most daintie and feetyvè performaunce nowe ycrasede beeynge done ynne M. CC.I." This manuscript wound up with a promise of a further instalment hereafter. Probably the most suggestive items in the whole matter were

these Notes explanatory of the positions and characters of T. Rowlie and Mastre Canynge, two persons referred to in the manuscript :—

2. T. Rowlie was a Secular Priest of St. John's in this City; his Merit as a Biographer, Historiographer, is great; as a Poet still greater: some of his Pieces would do honor to Pope: and the Person under whose Patronage they may appear to the World will lay the Englishman, the Antiquary, and the Poet under an eternal Obligation.

3. Canynge is described as the Founder of that noble Gothic Pile, St. Mary Redclift Church in this City; the Mæcenas of his time; one who could happily blend the Poet, the Painter, the Priest, and the Christian, perfect in each: a friend to all in distress, an honour to Bristol, and a Glory to the Church.

I have the lives of several eminent Carvers, Painters, &c., of Antiquity, but as they all relate to Bristol, may not be of Service in a General Historie; if they may be acceptable to you, they are at your Service.

These elucidatory Notes are, of course, by Chatterton, and are remarkable for the suggestions they proffer Walpole that he may have the honour of earning the eternal gratitude of various prominent persons by becoming the Patron, the Mæcenas, of the Rowley Romance and also of becoming "a Glory to the Church." Of course, Chatterton was unaware that Walpole, however desirous he might be of acquiring literary honour as a patron, was one of the meanest of men; was a professed regicide (although never losing an opportunity of worshipping royalties in person), and never missed a chance of scoffing at everybody and everything. These circstances are unknown to, or have been ignored by, biographers of Chatterton; as have also the now

proved facts that the "Honourable" gentleman was also an inveterate liar and a malicious forger. Had the boy poet known of these, or even some of these, circumstances he might have forborne from writing to Horace Walpole, or of insinuating to him his chance of becoming the Mæcenas of his time and "a Glory to the Church."

In another of his Notes to this "History of Painting" Chatterton referred to a certain John, second Abbot of St. Augustin's Minster, who, besides being the first English painter in oils, "was the greatest Poet of the Age in which he lived; he understood the learned languages. Take a Specimen of his Poetry, 'On King Richard I,'" says the lad, proceeding to quote some lines of Rowleyese, which, translated into English, are as follows:—

Heart of lion! shake thy sword,
  Bare thy murdering bloodstained hand,
Dash whole armies to the Queede [devil],
  Work thy will with raging brand.
Barons here on 'broidered seats,
  Fight in furs against the cale [cold];
Whilst thou in thundering arms
  Workest for whole cities' bale [woe].
Heart of lion! sound the trump!
  Sound it through the inner lands;
Fear flies sporting in the cry;
  In thy banner Terror stands."

In acknowledgment of Chatterton's short note and its enclosure Walpole, evidently deeming his correspondent was "a gentleman of elegant leisure," sent the following communication, although, trusting it would never turn up against him with its damning

contents, he afterwards asserted that he had never received the note or its enclosures :—

ARLINGTON STREET, *March* 28, 1769.

SIR,—I cannot but think myself singularly obliged by a gentleman with whom I have not the pleasure of being acquainted, when I read your very curious and kind letter, which I have this minute received. I give you a thousand thanks for it and for the very obliging offer you make me of communicating your MSS. to me. What you have already sent me is very valuable and full of information; but, instead of correcting you, Sir, you are far more able to correct me. I have not the happiness of understanding the Saxon language and without your learned notes, should not have been able to comprehend Rowley's text.

As a second edition of my "Anecdotes" was published last year, I must not flatter myself that a third will be wanted soon; but I shall be happy to lay up any notices you will be so good as to extract for me, and send me at your leisure; for as it is uncertain when I may use them, I would by no means borrow and detain your MSS.

Give me leave to ask you where Rowley's poems are to be found? I should not be sorry to print them; or at least a specimen of them, if they have never been printed.

The Abbot John's verses, that you have given me, are wonderful for their harmony and spirit; though there are some words I do not understand. You do not point out exactly the time when he lived, which I wish to know; as I suppose it was long before John Eyck's discovery of oil-painting. If so, it confirms what I had guessed, and have hinted in my "Anecdotes," that oil-painting was known here much earlier than that discovery or revival.

I will not trouble you with more questions now, Sir, but flatter myself from the humanity and politeness you have already shown me that you will sometimes give me leave to consult you. I hope, too, you will forgive the simplicity of my direction as you have favoured me with none other.

I am, Sir, your much obliged
and obedient humble servant,
HOR. WALPOLE.

PS.—Be so good as to direct to Mr. Walpole, Arlington Street.

This letter, with its remarks about the valuable information sent him, despite its writer's vehement denial of having ever sent it, is still in existence in the British Museum, duly wafered, addressed and postmarked. It had been left in the possession of Barrett, from whom it passed into the hands of Dr. Glynn, and from him it was acquired by the nation. Walpole's reply naturally delighted Chatterton, who was thoroughly deceived by its friendly and courteous tone as to the character of the man he was corresponding with. He answered it at once, enclosing a continuation of "The History of Painters," as well as giving, unfortunately for the peaceful progress of the correspondence, a full account, so it is supposed, of his real circumstances. All that is left of this letter are these words :—

I offer you some further anecdotes and specimens of Poetry and Painters, and am,

Your very humble and obedient Servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

March 30th, 1769,
37, Corn Street, Bristol.

It is supposed that Walpole, when returning the correspondence later on, cut off the rest of Chatterton's letter to retain, if needed, as evidence of its writer's confessions.

According to Walpole's own account, which is the only testimony on the matter available, Chatterton informed him "that he was the son of a poor widow, who supported him with great difficulty; that he was a clerk, or an apprentice to an attorney, but had a

taste and turn for more elegant studies; and hinted a wish that I would assist him with my interest in emerging out of so dull a profession, by procuring him some place in which he could pursue his natural bent. He affirmed that great treasures of ancient poetry had been discovered in his native city, and were in the hands of a person who had lent him those he had transmitted to me; for he now sent me others, amongst which was an absolute modern pastoral in dialogue, thinly sprinkled with old words. Pray observe that he affirmed having received the poems from another person; whereas it is ascertained that the gentleman at Bristol, who possesses the fund of Rowley's poems, received them from Chatterton."

It must be remembered that these words are what Walpole chose to publish some years after the poet's death, and that nobody could gainsay them, or any part of them. The "Honourable" gentleman continues the narrative—a narrative he took care to have inserted in the pages of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, after he had had some copies of it printed in his own private printing-press at Strawberry Hill—in these words:—

I wrote to a relation of mine at Bath [1] to inquire into the situation and character of Chatterton, according to his own account of himself; nothing was returned about his character, but his own story was verified.

In the meantime I communicated the poems to Mr. Gray and Mr. Mason, who at once pronounced them forgeries, and declared there was no symptom in them of their being the

[1] The Countess of Ossory.

productions of near so distant an age; the language and metres being totally unlike anything ancient. . . .

Being satisfied with my intelligence about Chatterton, I wrote him a letter with as much kindness and tenderness as if I had been his guardian. . . . I undeceived him about my being a person of any interest, and urged to him that in duty and gratitude to his mother, who had straitened herself to breed him up to a profession, he ought to labour in it, that in her old age he might absolve his filial debt; and I told him that when he should have made a fortune he might unbend himself with the studies consonant to his inclinations. I told him, also, that I had communicated his transcripts to much better judges, and that they were by no means satisfied with the authenticity of his supposed MSS.

Whatever Walpole's letter really was, it showed Chatterton at once that he had utterly mistaken the character of his courteous correspondent; and that no sooner had the man discovered the lowly position of the poet than all his real interest in him and his correspondence had evaporated. In the first flush of shame and disappointment Chatterton wrote a promise he could not fulfil, although it is possible that in his first fit of disappointment he did really destroy some of his manuscripts. His words to Walpole were:—

SIR,—I am not able to dispute with a person of your literary character. I have transcribed Rowley's poems, &c., &c., from a transcript in the possession of a gentleman who is assured of their authenticity. St. Augustin's Minster was in Bristol. In speaking of painters in Bristol, I mean glass-stainers. The MSS. have long been in the hands of the present possessor, which is all I know of them. Though I am but sixteen years of age I have lived long enough to see that poverty attends literature. I am obliged to you, Sir, for your advice, and will go a little beyond it, by destroying all my useless

lumber of literature, and never using my pen again but in the law.

I am,
Your most humble servant,
THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Bristol, April 8th, 1769.

Walpole did not condescend to take any notice of this letter, which long afterwards he described as "rather a peevish answer." Barrett was evidently pressing Chatterton for the "History of the Painters," and the other MSS., with a view to incorporate them in his long-projected book on Bristol. There are still preserved in the British Museum two differing drafts of a letter intended for Walpole, one of them by Barrett, the other by Chatterton. Neither was sent, but finally another, a third, was drafted, approved, copied by Chatterton, and duly forwarded. It was in these terms:—

SIR,—Being fully convinced of the papers of Rowley being genuine, I should be obliged to you to return me the copy I sent you, having no other. Mr. Barrett, an able antiquary, who is now writing the "History of Bristol," has desired it of me; and I should be sorry to deprive him, or the world, indeed, of a valuable curiosity, which I know to be an authentic piece of antiquity.

Your very humble servant,
THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Bristol, Corn Street,
April 14, 1769.

PS.—If you wish to publish them yourself, they are at your service.

It should be pointed out that the two first drafts, prepared by Chatterton and Barrett respectively, were

much longer and more controversially worded than the one eventually adopted, and by their remarks prove that Walpole must have made reference to the specimens of verse sent him by the youthful poet, as being too harmonious for the age assigned them; to the metre in which some were written not having been known until used by Spenser; to Mr. Vertue having been appealed to for his opinion; and to some other topics.

Chatterton did not obtain any reply to his letter of April 14th. He waited until the 24th July following and then, doubtless urged by Barrett, wrote as follows:—

SIR,—I cannot reconcile your behaviour with the notions I once entertained of you. I think myself injured, Sir; and did you not know my circumstances, you would not dare to treat me thus. I have sent twice for a copy of the manuscripts: no answer from you. An explanation, or excuse for your silence would oblige.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

On August 4th following, nearly four months after Chatterton's first request for his transcripts, Walpole says that in response to this "singularly impertinent letter," "snapping up both his poems and letters, without taking a copy of either, for which I am now sorry, I returned all to him, and thought no more of him or them," for a very long time, when the subject cropped up in ways unpleasing to the noble gentleman.

In after years, when Walpole's behaviour to Chatterton had been vigorously discussed in the journals of the time, he deemed it necessary to defend

himself, and explained that when he received the poet's letter of April 14th, he

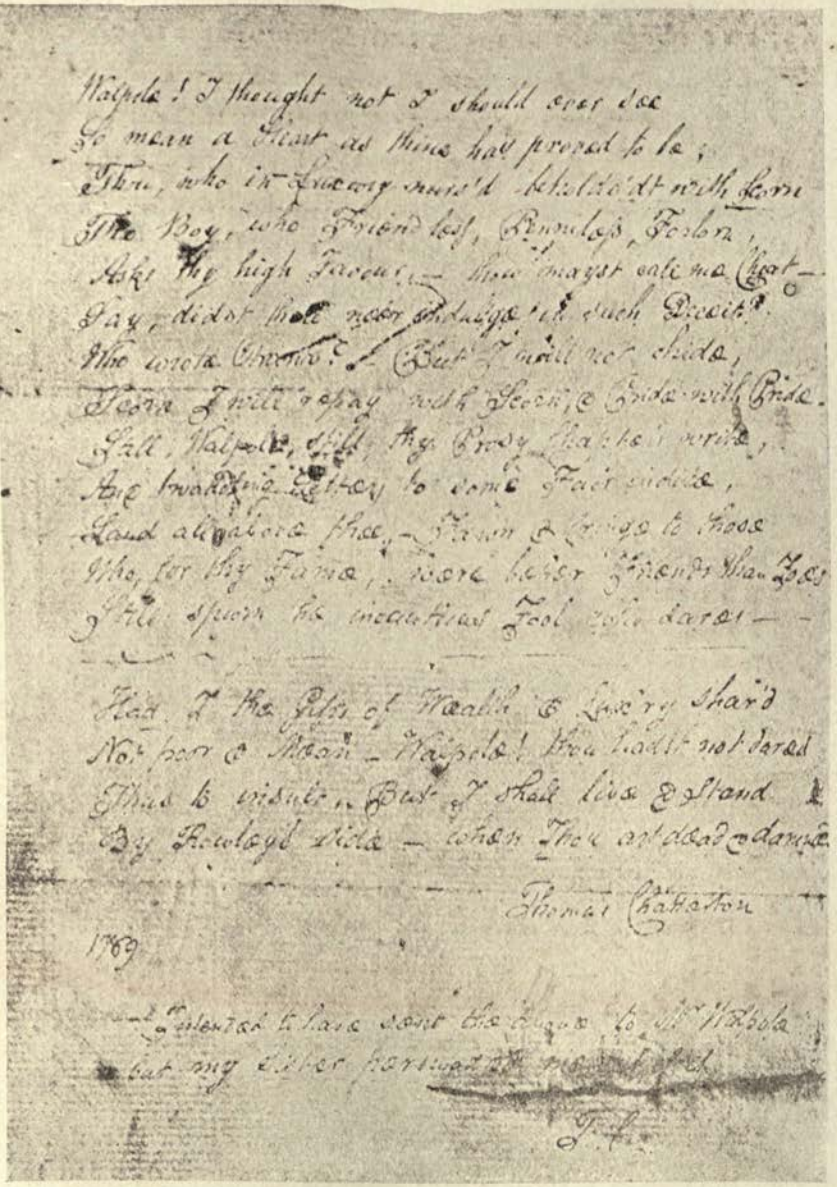
was going to Paris in a day or two, and either forgot his request of the poems, or perhaps not having time to have them copied, deferred till my return, which was to be in six weeks. I protest I do not remember which was the case; and yet, though in a cause of so little importance, I will not utter a syllable of which I am not positively certain, nor will charge my memory with a tittle beyond what it retains.

Soon after my return from France, I received another letter [*i.e.*, July 24th] from Chatterton, the style of which was singularly impertinent. He demanded his poems roughly; and added, that I would not have *dared* to use him so ill, if he had not acquainted me with the narrowness of his circumstances.

My heart did not accuse me of insolence to him. I wrote an answer expostulating with him on his injustice, and renewing good advice—but upon second thoughts, reflecting that so wrong-headed a young man, of whom I knew nothing and whom I had never seen, might be absurd enough to print my letter, I flung it into the fire.

This really concluded the matter as far as Chatterton was personally concerned, but the insult rankled in the lad's heart and he could not forget, even if he did eventually forgive. Whilst he was still smarting under the unexpected blow, he seized his pen and with his customary impetuosity wrote off the following lines:—

Walpole! I thought not I should ever see
So mean a Heart as thine has proved to be;
Thou, who, in Luxury nurst, beholdst with Scorn
The Boy, who Friendless, Penniless, Forlorn,
Asks thy high Favour—thou mayst call me Cheat
Say, didst thou ne'er indulge in such Deceit?
Who wrote Otranto? But I will not chide,
Scorn I will repay with Scorn, and Pride with Pride,



Walpole! I thought not I should ever see
So mean a Heart as thine has proved to be;
Thee, who in Infancy nurs'd, fondled, fed,
The Boy, who Friendless, Penniless, Forlorn,
Ask'd thy high Favour,—thou mayst call me Cheat—
Say, didst Thou ever oblige with such Deceit?
Who wrote Otranto? Liar! Thou will not dare,
Base Lyttelton to stay with Scorn & Pride
Fall, Walpole, fall, thy Proxy Shakspeare writes,
And twaddling Letters to some Fair indites,
Hand all before thee,—Scorn & Pride to those
Who, for thy Fame, wore better Friends than Thee
Still spurn the ineffectual Fool who dares—

Had I the Pelf of Wealth & Luxury shar'd
Nor poor & Mean—Walpole! thou hadst not dared
Thus to insult me. But I shall live & Stand
By Rowley's side—when Thou art dead & damn'd

Thomas Chatterton

1769

I intended to have sent the Rogue to St Paul's
but my Elder Brother would not let me

T. C.

LINES ON HORACE WALPOLE.

Still, Walpole, still, thy prosy Chapters write,
And twaddling Letters to some Fair indite:
Laud all above thee,—fawn and cringe to those
Who, for thy Fame, were better Friends than Foes;
Still spurn the incautious Fool who dares—

. . . . .

Had I the Gifts of Wealth and Luxury shared,
Not poor and mean—Walpole! thou hadst not dared
Thus to insult. But I shall live and stand
By Rowley's side—when Thou art dead and damned.
1769. THOMAS CHATTERTON.[1]

According to the lad's own account, after he had thus relieved his feelings, he had "intended to have sent the above to Mr. Walpole, but my sister persuaded me out of it." It was fortunate that the good sense of his affectionate sister saved him from acting in so ill-judged a way, although the lines could scarcely have embittered Walpole's hatred more than the boy's last letter had done, and it is difficult to imagine how the author of "Otranto" could have displayed more rancour and malice than he did, when Chatterton's death afforded him a safe opportunity.

To blame Walpole for not assisting the youth to put the Rowley romance before the public is absurd; but for the man's cowardly, mean, untruthful attack upon Chatterton's reputation, after the lad's death, all fair-minded persons must hold him in contempt. To blame him for not helping, or even for not encouraging the young poet in seeking a literary career is uncalled for: Walpole only acted as any ordinary man of the world, even of the present time,

[1] The manuscript of these lines is in the Museum of Antiquities at Bristol.

would have acted; what renders his conduct fairly loathsome is the cruel, the heartless way in which, to palliate his own behaviour towards him, he did all he could after the lad's death to misrepresent his actions, defame his character, and belittle the value of his works. In private letters to Hannah More, the Countess of Ossory, the Rev. Mr. Cole, Mason, and others, he wrote the most violent invectives against the dead youth. To the last-named correspondent he wrote that Chatterton "was a consummate villain and had gone enormous lengths before he destroyed himself," and characterised him as a "complete rogue." To Mr. Cole he refers to him as "a liar," "a forger," "a rascal," and other terms of discredit, and to his other correspondents uses equally opprobrious language about the dead boy.

In his so-called "Vindication," Walpole returns to the attack, continually referring to the dead youth as "an impostor" and to his "forgeries": he says, "all of the house of forgery are relations;" adding that Chatterton's "ingenuity in counterfeiting styles might easily have led him to those more facile imitations of prose, promissory notes," and that "in encouraging him, I should have encouraged a propensity to forgery, which is not the talent most wanting culture in the present age." This moralising humbug seems to have thought, by diverting public disgust and distrust towards the deceased poet, to avert suspicion from himself, and to screen his own delinquencies. Nowadays few readers of his vitriolic correspondence know that this slanderer of friend and foe alike; this retailer of libels and inventor of calumny, was himself

a most skilful falsifier and forger of documents, one whose misdeeds should have made him answerable to the law, as they would nowadays (*vide* Appendix C).

It would not have been necessary to allude to the man's attempted belittlement of the various productions of Chatterton's genius had the matter already righted itself, as it has in the cases of his forgotten disparagements of the works of Goldsmith, Sterne, Johnson, and other men of genius: these miserable matters would not have been dragged forth once more into the light of day, were it not a fact that many of Walpole's cruel imputations are still bearing ill fruit, and from time to time furnish texts for biographers to preach upon to the detriment of Chatterton's reputation. It is difficult to make some people believe that a nobleman—and Walpole succeeded to an earldom—could persistently and maliciously strive to dishonour the memory of a poor young poet whose only offence was an attempt to delude the author of "Otranto" as he, in a similar way, but without the lad's excuse, had deceived the reading public.

Although Chatterton had been so cruelly disappointed in his expectation of getting the Rowley poems presented to the public under the protection of an influential person, and circumstances compelled him to retire more and more absolutely behind the mask of his mediæval priest, he did not cease from talking about the parchments to all and everybody who would listen to him. His sister relates that when Mr. Stephens, of Salisbury, a relative, visited them, her brother would talk of nothing but these

manuscripts, and Mr. Stephens, on being appealed to, confirmed her statement.

It would seem that this relative of the Chattertons, although described as a "breeches-maker," must have been a man of some knowledge of matters higher than his business, and of some education, otherwise the poet could scarcely have discussed with him such things as the Rowley poems and the various subjects touched upon in the following communication. This letter, published in Southey's edition of Chatterton's Works, and stated to have been furnished by Mr. Catcott, is undated; but it will be noticed that it must have been written after the Dodsley and Walpole incidents:—

SIR,—If you think vanity is the dictator of the following lines you will not do me justice. No, Sir, it is only the desire of proving myself worthy your correspondence, has induced me to write. My partial friends flatter me with giving me a little uncommon share of abilities. It is Mr. Stephens alone, whose good sense disdains flattery, whom I appeal to. It is a maxim with me that compliments of friends is [*sic*] more dangerous than railing of enemies. You may enquire, if you please, for the *Town and Country Magazine*, wherein all signed D. B. and Asaphides are mine. The pieces called Saxon[1] are originally and totally the production of my muse; though I should think it a greater merit to be able to translate Saxon. As the said Magazine is by far the best of its kind, I shall have some pieces in it every month; and if I vary from my said signature will give you notice thereof.

Having some curious Anecdotes of Paintings and Painters, I sent them to Mr. Walpole, Author of the "Anecdotes of Painting," "Historic Doubts," and other pieces well known in the

[1] Called "Ethelgar," "Kenrick," "Cerdick," "Gorthmund," and "Cutholf."

learned world. His answer I make bold to send you. Hence I began a literary correspondence, which ended as most such do. I differed with him in the age of a MS. He insists on his superior talents, which is no proof of that superiority. We possibly may engage in one of the periodical publications, though I know not who will give the onset. Of my proceedings in this affair I shall make bold to acquaint you.

My next correspondent of note is Dodsley, whose collection of modern and antique poems are in every library. In this city, my principal acquaintances are Mr. Barrett, now writing at a vast expence, an ancient and modern history of Bristol, a task more difficult than the cleansing the Augean stable; many have attempted but none succeeded in it; yet will this work, when finished, please not only my fellow-citizens, but all the world; and Mr. Catcott, author of that excellent Treatise on the Deluge and other pieces, to enumerate which would argue a supposition that you were not acquainted with the literary world. To the studies of these gentlemen I am always admitted, and they are not below asking my advice in any matters of antiquity.

I have made a very curious collection of coins and antiques. As I cannot afford to have a gordlabine [*sic*] to keep them in, I commonly give them to those who can. If you pick up any Roman, Saxon, English coins, or other antiques, even a sight of them would highly oblige me.

When you quarter your arms in the mullet, say, Or, a fess, vert; by the name of Chatterton. I trace your family from Fitzstephen, son of Stephen, Earl of Ammerle [Aumerle ?] in 1095, son of Od [Odo ?] Earl of Bloys, and Lord of Holderness.

I am, your very humble servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

A strange kind of epistle to send to a "breeches-maker," although he may have descended from a Norman earl, or any other grandee, during the seven centuries supposed to have elapsed. It is rather curious that Chatterton, in his desire to display his literary activity, should have claimed as his the

pseudonym of "Asaphides," as that was the name over which a Bristol linen-draper, Mr. Lockstone, published his metrical effusions. It is but fair to Chatterton to state that he revised and edited these pieces of Lockstone's to suit them for publication, and in consequence one of them has been frequently included in his poetical works.

## CHAPTER IX

### A LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

CHATTERTON'S failure to get his Rowley Manuscripts placed before the public intensified his disgust at the aimless and seemingly hopeless position he occupied. Bristolians were unable or unwilling to further his plans for publication, either by money or influence, and although his two first schemes for obtaining the co-operation of Londoners of position had failed, he believed that success would be certain could he contrive to get to the metropolis. In various ways his condition was deplorable. Lambert gave nothing but board and lodging for his services, and, however economical he might be, the youth could not mix in any class of society, much less that he was now associating with, without incurring some expenses, and he was now too old to manage on the small sum his mother could spare him from her slender earnings, even if his proud, affectionate spirit would have permitted him to allow her to do more for him, as evidently she was unable to. All testimony proves that from George Catcott he received little or nothing in return for his Rowley Manuscripts,

although the pewterer had been presented with some of the finest; whilst the pitiable sums he had, at long intervals, from Burgum or Barrett were utterly inadequate for his necessities. The surgeon seems to have considered the loan of some books and a little instruction in surgery ample compensation for the parchments and transcripts he received from Chatterton for his "History of Bristol," and what the youth obtained from Burgum may be gauged by the reward given him for the pedigree. His receipts being so small it is not to be wondered that his expenditure exceeded his income, but his own statement, made in the circumstances it was, may be accepted that his total indebtedness, due to two persons, was under five pounds.

Naturally Chatterton became soured in temper and more and more sarcastic in his verse. His favourite friend Phillips was dead. His acquaintanceship with the Rev. Alexander Catcott, the most cultivated man he had as yet come in contact with, was ruptured, and, as he must have felt, by his own boyish impetuosity; his applications, undertaken with such hopes of success, to Dodsley and to Walpole had both ended in disappointment. His servitude under Lambert pressed upon him with ever increasing torture. He owed money without any prospect, in existing circumstances, of repaying it, so that altogether life in Bristol became unbearable.

He determined to get away from his native city by some means or the other, and make for London. He had been in communication with various pub-

lishers in the metropolis for whose publications he had written and to whom his name was therefore known. According to the statements of certain of his associates at Bristol, the London publishers were by no means sparing of their praises and made liberal promises of assistance and employment should he make his residence in the metropolis, so that if their reminiscences were trustworthy his projected journey to London was by no means foolhardy. According to his former associate, Thistlethwaite, when asked what plan of life he intended to pursue in the metropolis, Chatterton said, "My first attempt shall be in the Literary way. The promises I have received are sufficient to dispel doubt; but should I, contrary to my expectations, find myself deceived, I will, in that case, turn Methodist preacher. Credulity is as potent a deity as ever, and a new sect may easily be devised. But if that too shall fail me, my last and final resource is a pistol."

Thistlethwaite's statements have been found in some cases so improbable, if not impossible, that it is unsafe to rely upon them without corroboration, especially when made many years after the incident to which they refer and when whole conversations are circumstantially repeated. The words imputed to Chatterton do not seem altogether unsuited to the speaker, but they must not be accepted as spoken by him, or as anything more than an approximate embodiment of some passing fancy, and need not be regarded as an expression of his normal feelings or intentions. A published legend, especially if promulgated long after the

event to which it refers, is, like a certain weed, difficult to eradicate from the soil where it has taken root. Thistlethwaite's statements have given birth to a plenteous crop of anecdotes to prove how Chatterton brooded over and became familiar with the idea of suicide, but the element of authenticity is weak in all of them. In the "Supplement" to the "Miscellanies" of Chatterton, published in 1784, the following lines are given as by the youthful poet, but no proof of their authorship is cited:—

> Since we can die but once, what matters it,
> If rope, or garter, poison, pistol, sword,
> Slow wasting sickness, or the sudden burst
> Of valve arterial in the noble parts,
> Curtail the miseries of human life?
> Though varied is the cause, the effect's the same;
> All to one common dissolution tends.

In the "Memoir of Chatterton," ascribed to C. B. Willcox, prefixed to the 1842 Cambridge Edition of his Works, the following anecdote on this suicide theme is given without any authority being assigned to it. The poet was spending an evening with a party of intimate companions, when, amongst other subjects, the conversation turned upon suicide; some took one side of the argument and some another as to whether the act of self-destruction was one of bravery or cowardice. Chatterton, suddenly plucking from his breast a small pocket-pistol, and holding it to his forehead, with resolute accent exclaimed, "Now if one had but the courage to pull the trigger!" It was then for the first time discovered that he was

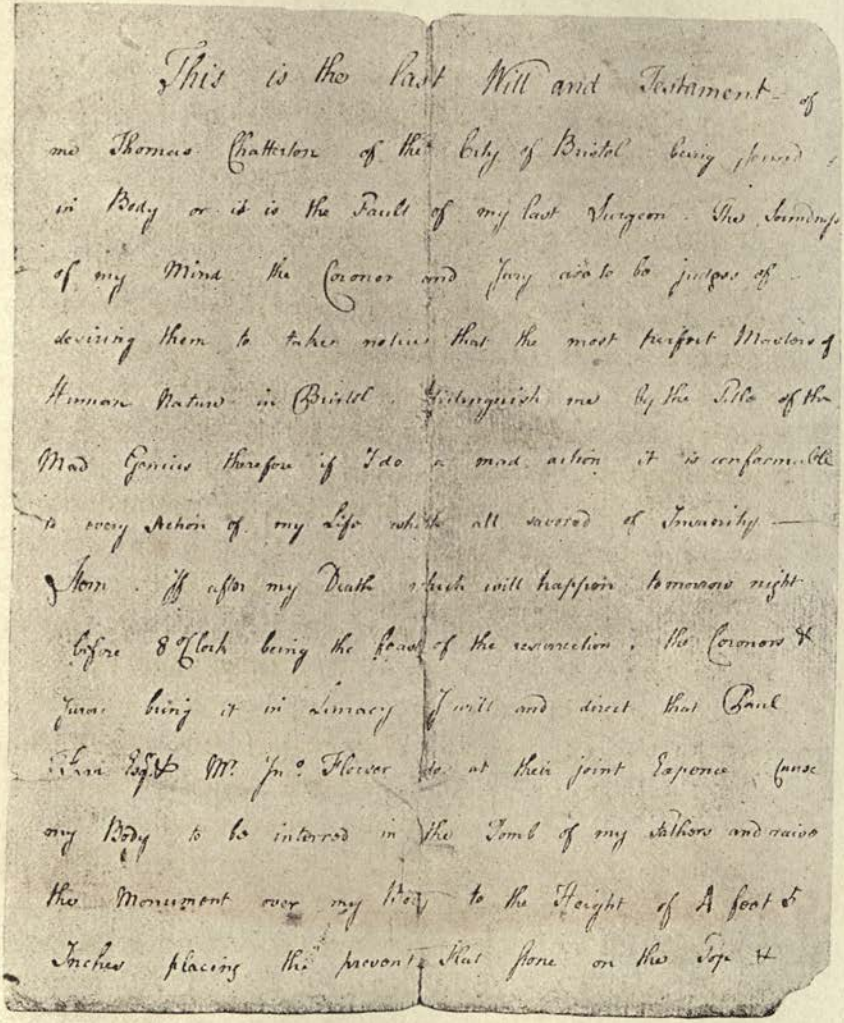
in the constant habit of carrying this loaded weapon about his person.

The unnamed authority for this story evidently knew little of the poet's habits or temperament. As Professor Wilson has pointed out, "there seems little probability to favour the idea of his carrying fire-arms in any such fashion;" indeed, such articles were not so portable in those days, nor so easily acquired as they are now, and most decidedly Chatterton was one of the last persons to make public declaration of want of courage to carry out anything, even self-destruction. It is but fair to state, however, that in the unpublished memoranda the Rev. Samuel Seyer put by for use in another projected volume of his "History of Bristol," is to be read amid several unpublished anecdotes of Chatterton that a relative of the Rev. Dr. Broughton had informed him the poet, when living in Bristol, "constantly carried a loaded pistol in his pocket, and oftentimes when walking with Dr. Broughton has taken it out of his Pocket, and putting it to his mouth, said he wished he could persuade himself to draw the Trigger." This story had evidently got about and eventually formed the foundation for C. B. Willcox's sensational narrative.

Dr. Gregory, Chatterton's first biographer, is, indeed, the authority for a statement that long before the poet left Bristol he had repeatedly intimated to Mr. Lambert's servants his attention of putting an end to his own existence. Mr. Lambert's mother, according to this account, was particularly terrified, but was unable to persuade her son, the scrivener, to

take any notice of these threats until one day he found a document, which Chatterton took an opportunity of leaving upon his desk, bearing the ominous inscription "The last Will and Testament of Thomas Chatterton." The scrivener duly read the paper and found that the writer avowed his intention of destroying himself on the following day, viz., Easter Sunday, April 15, 1770.

About the same time Lambert found and took possession, in his usual high-handed manner, of a letter from Chatterton, addressed to his friend Clayfield, thanking him for his past kindnesses and informing him that by the time this communication reached him, the writer would be no more. Instead of forwarding the letter to the person to whom it was addressed, Lambert sent it to Barrett, thus showing that he was fully aware of his apprentice's intimate acquaintanceship with the surgeon. Writing about this matter some time after Chatterton's death, and when there was no one able to question his statements, Barrett says that on hearing from Lambert he sent for the youth and "questioned him closely upon the occasion in a tender and friendly manner, but forcibly urged to him the horrible crime of self-murder, however glossed over by our present libertines, blaming the bad company and principles he had adopted. This betrayed him into some compunction, and by his tears he seemed to feel it. At the same time he acknowledged he wanted for nothing, and denied any distress upon that account." This is the narrative given by the surgeon in his account of Chatterton, an account more remarkable for its sup-


This is the Last Will and Testament of
me Thomas Chatterton of the City of Bristol being sound
in Body or it is the Fault of my Last Surgeon. The Soundness
of my Mind the Coroner and Jury are to be judges of
desiring them to take notice that the most perfect Madness of
Human Nature in Bristol distinguish me by the Title of the
Mad Genius therefore if I do a mad action it is conformable
to every Action of my Life which all savored of Insanity —
Item. If after my Death which will happen tomorrow night
before 8 o'Clock being the Feast of the resurrection. The Coroner &
Jurors bring it in Lunacy I will and direct that Paul
Farr Esq.r & Mr. Jn.o Flower do at their joint Expence cause
my Body to be interred in the Tomb of my Fathers and raise
the Monument over my Body to the Height of 4 feet 6
Inches placing the present Flat Stone on the Top &

FIRST PAGE OF CHATTERTON'S WILL.

To face p. 184.

pression of all facts of the intercourse of the two dissimilar associates than for anything else.

The youth was left in the dark as to how Barrett had obtained his information about the threatened suicide, nor did he know that the surgeon had seen his letter to Clayfield, "a worthy generous man," as Barrett is careful to record in his "History," so the following day he sent this letter to him:—

SIR,—Upon recollection I don't know how Mr. Clayfield could come by his letter, as I had intended to have given him a letter but did not. In regard to my motives for the supposed rashness, I shall observe that I keep no worse company than *myself*; I never drink to excess, and have without vanity too much sense to be attached to the mercenary retailers of iniquity. No! it is my *pride*, my damn'd, native unconquerable *pride* that plunges me into distraction. You must know that 19-20ths of my composition is pride; I must either live a slave, a servant, have no will of my own, no sentiments of my own which I may freely declare as such, or *die*! Perplexing alternative! But it distracts me to think of it. I will endeavour to learn humility, but it cannot be here. What it will cost me on the trial, Heaven knows!

I am,
Your much obliged,
Unhappy humble servant,
T. C.

Thursday evening.

After having suggested by his remarks that Chatterton had for some time been contemplating suicide, Dr. Gregory proceeds in his biography of the poet to justify his suggestion by observing that the "Will" was, probably, "the result of temporary uneasiness," and then adds a footnote to the effect that he had "been informed on good authority, that

it was occasioned by the refusal of a gentleman, whom he had occasionally complimented in his poems, to accommodate him with a supply of money." As a matter of fact, it is pretty generally believed Chatterton had purposely left the "Will" where it should be found, with the express intention of frightening Lambert into getting rid of his undesirable apprentice. It is also stated that Mrs. Lambert found the terrifying document, and she giving it to her husband, undoubtedly with some of that matrimonial clatter for which she was noted, he, like a respectable, prudent householder, considered it advisable to free himself of so dangerous or, at any rate, troublesome an inmate of his establishment at once, before anything uncomfortable happened. He dismissed Chatterton from his service—that is to say, speaking officially, he released him from the remainder of his term of servitude, after he had been in his employ for a little more than two years and nine months.

Of course, Lambert has been blamed for his treatment of Chatterton, and much has been imputed to him that he was guiltless of, but it must be stated that his behaviour was more due to his environment and natural temperament than to any inherent brutality. After the lad had left Lambert does not appear to have borne him any ill-will, or to have spoken disparagingly of him, as others did, but he did not comprehend him and was, there is evidence to prove, glad to get rid of him. Chatterton, in his hurried departure, left some of his belongings behind him, including an old book on Magic, which had probably belonged to his father. This volume contained various notes

by the lad who, so Lambert told his friend Paget, had endeavoured to raise spirits by means of the instructions it gave.

Amongst the odds and ends, besides the "Will," which the apprentice omitted to take with him were copies of ancient musical notes, heraldic diagrams, a drawing of a coat-of-arms with *sixty-nine quarterings!* scraps of verse, and a folio sheet of two and a half pages, dated January, 1769, and headed, "Extract of a letter from a young gentleman at Plymouth, to a young lady his sister at Bristol." It is a curious piece of banter on the birth of a child, representing it as a destitute stranger who has mysteriously arrived. Amongst the verse are the following lines, probably written as a portion of "Amphitryon," the unpublished poem which was subsequently revised and completed as "The Revenge":—

> Eternal Vengeance flaming o'er his head:
> He clashed the Clouds, bade swelling Thunders sound,
> And rapid whirls the . . . Lightnings round;
> A . . . substance of Etherial smoke,
> The Godhead stood confest and thus He spoke.

Another piece of verse is entitled "March, an Elegy," and was, doubtless, intended as a companion poem to the "February" elegy, published in the *Town and Country Magazine* for February, 1770. It is not unlikely that he intended to deal with each month in the year in a similar manner. The fragment for March is:—

> Hark, 'tis his knell!—I tremble as I hear.
> How wells the chilling . . . to my heart.

Why weeps my Darla? Why this starting tear?
Ah! can I comfort, unpossest in part,
Since Hardwick's dead?

Although having no particular value in themselves, these fragments are interesting as throwing light upon the lad's method of work.

Whether the "Last Will and Testament" was only a hoax, as is generally believed, or whether it was really intended to be the lad's farewell to life, as the prefatory words of it appear to suggest: "All this wrote between 11 and 12 o'clock, Saturday, in the utmost distress of mind, April 14, 1770," is one of the unsolved riddles of the youth's short but perplexing career. The most probable explanation of the document is that it resulted from a conflict between his impetuous feelings; was the outcome of his varying moods, sometimes serious, sometimes sarcastic; and that the writer himself only wrote as his mind swayed between contending impressions. Colour is given to the idea that he intended to be at least partially facetious by the fact, first noticed by Professor Wilson, that portions of the Chatterton document are derived from the Will of Samuel Derrick, a deceased Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, which had been published in the April number of the *Town and Country Magazine* for 1769. The account of Derrick and his testamentary document follows a paper by Chatterton in the above publication, and must have been read by him, as several clauses in his own so-called "Will" are directly derived from that of the deceased M.C.

As there are some points in the Chatterton "Will" to which particular notice will be drawn, it is advisable to give the document *in extenso*. Following the quotation given above, as to his "distress of mind," the testator lapses into verse, probably having originally intended to have written the whole in that manner:—

BURGUM,[1] I thank thee, thou hast let me see
That Bristol has impressed her stamp on thee.
Thy generous spirit emulates the Mayor's,
Thy generous spirit with thy Bristol pairs.
Gods! What would Burgum give to get a name,
And snatch his blundering dialect from shame!
What would he give to hand his memory down
To Time's remotest boundary?—A crown.
Would you ask more, his swelling face looks blue;
Futurity he rates at two pounds two.
Well, Burgum, take thy laurel to thy brow;
With a rich saddle decorate a sow;
Strut in Iambics, totter in an Ode,
Promise, and never pay, and be the mode.

CATCOTT, for thee, I know thy heart is good,
But, ah! thy merit's seldom understood;
Too bigoted to whimsies, which thy youth
Received to venerate as Gospel truth,
Thy friendship never could be dear to me,
Since all I am is opposite to thee.
If ever obligated to thy purse,
Rowley discharges all—my first, chief curse!
For had I never known the antique lore,
I ne'er had ventured from my peaceful shore

[1] It has been suggested that it was Burgum's refusal to accommodate Chatterton with a loan of money that incited him to contemplate suicide.

To be the wreck of promises and hopes,
A Boy of Learning, and a Bard of Tropes;
But happy in my humble sphere had moved,
Untroubled, unrespected, unbeloved.

To BARRETT next, he has my thanks sincere
For all the little knowledge I had here.
But what was knowledge? Could it here succeed
When scarcely twenty in the town can read?
Could knowledge bring in interest to maintain
The wild expenses of a poet's brain?
Disinterested Burgum never meant
To take my knowledge for his gain per cent.
When wildly squandering everything I got
On books and learning, and the Lord knows what,
Could Burgum then, my critic, patron, friend,
Without security attempt to lend?
No, that would be imprudent in the man;
Accuse him of imprudence if you can,
He promised, I confess, and seemed sincere;
Few keep an honorary promise here.
I thank thee, Barrett,—thy advice was right,
But 'twas ordained by fate that I should write.
Spite of the prudence of this prudent place,
I wrote my mind, nor hid the author's face.
Harris ere long, when, reeking from the press,
My numbers make his self-importance less,
Will wrinkle up his face, and damn the day,
And drag my body to the triple way,
Poor superstitious mortals! wreck your hate
Upon my cold remains——

Here the verse ends. Although Chatterton may have started with the idea of writing the entire document in verse, in the impetuosity of his composition, or in consequence of some interruption, such as the unexpected arrival of his employer, he ends the lines thus abruptly, and when he resumed

his pen found prose better suited to his purpose. The manner in which the youth introduces Burgum's name, and returns to it subsequently, lends colour to the suggestion that his disappointment in not obtaining a sum of money he required and which had been promised by the pewterer, was the cause of his temporary trouble. Accepting Chatterton's expressions literally, it would seem that Burgum had attempted to add versification to his many presumed qualifications, and in all probability the young apprentice had been assisting him in his attempts.

Sir Walter Scott, who was not above doing a certain amount of literary fabrication himself, appears unduly severe on his youthful predecessor's imposture, and considers that Chatterton, by the way he alludes to "the antique lore," "seems to attest the originality of Rowley, even in the *Will* which he wrote before his projected suicide." This idea is far fetched and a perversion of Chatterton's expression, which rather appears to point to a confession of authorship: *his work as Rowley*, he contends, is ample compensation for any remuneration received, if, indeed, any had been, from George Catcott. Several of the boy's expressions are involved and some exaggerated—such as the statement that scarcely twenty people in Bristol can read—but the whole document is evidently hastily written and unrevised. The concluding lines are conclusive that the writer was acquainted with the manner in which the bodies of persons found guilty of *felo de se* were treated. The prose remainder of the "Will" runs thus:—

This is the last Will and Testament of me, Thomas Chatterton, of the city of Bristol; being sound in body, or it is the fault of my last surgeon; the soundness of my mind, the coroner and jury are to be judges of, desiring them to take notice, that the most perfect masters of human nature in Bristol distinguished me by the title of the Mad Genius; therefore, if I do a mad action, it is conformable to every action of my life, which all savoured of insanity.[1]

*Item.* If after my death, which will happen to-morrow night before eight o'clock, being the Feast of the Resurrection, the Coroner and the jury bring it in lunacy, I will and direct that Paul Farr, Esq., and Mr. John Flower, at their joint expense, cause my body to be interred in the tomb of my fathers, and raise the monument over my body to the height of four feet five inches, placing the present flat stone on the top, and adding six tablets.

On the *first* to be engraved in Old English characters:—

Vous qui par ici pasez
Pur l'ame Guateroine Chatterton priez
Le cors di ci ici gist
L'ame receybe Jhu Crist. M. CCL.

It is deemed best to give the old French and Latin of these inscriptions corrected, and not as they appear in Chatterton's "Will."

On the *second* tablet, in Old English characters:—

Orate pro animabus Alanus Chatterton et Alicia Uxoris ejus, qui quidem Alanus obiit I die mensis Novemb. M. CCCCL.
quorum animabus propitietur Deus. Amen.

[1] Southey says: "Chatterton *was* insane—better proof of this than the Coroner's Inquest is, that there was insanity in his family. [His sister, Mrs. Newton, was for some period confined in an asylum.] His biographers were not informed of this important fact; and the editors of his collected Works forbore to state it, because the Collection was made for the benefit of his surviving relations, a sister and a niece, in both of whom the disease had manifested itself."

On the *third* tablet, in Roman characters:—

Sacred to the memory of
*Thomas Chatterton.*

Subchaunter of the Cathedral of this city, whose ancestors were residents of St. Mary Redcliffe since the year 1140. He died the 7th of August, 1752.

On the *fourth* tablet, in Roman characters:—

To the memory of
*Thomas Chatterton.*

Reader, judge not if thou art a Christian, believe that he shall be judged by a superior Power. To that Power alone is he now answerable.

On the *fifth* and *sixth* tablets, which shall front each other:—

Atchievements, viz. on the one, vert, a fess, or, crest, a mantle of estate, gules, supported by a spear, sable, headed or. On the other, or, a fess, vert, crest a cross of Knights Templars.

And I will and direct that if the coroner's inquest bring it in *felo de se*, the said monument shall be notwithstanding erected. And if the said Paul Farr and John Flower have souls so Bristolish as to refuse this my request, they will transmit a copy of my Will to the Society for supporting the Bill of Rights, whom I hereby empower to build the said monument according to the aforesaid directions. And if they the said Paul Farr and John Flower should build the said monument, I will and direct that the second edition of my "Kew Gardens" shall be dedicated to them in the following dedication:—To Paul Farr and John Flower, Esqrs., this book is most humbly dedicated by the Author's Ghost.

*Item.* I give all my vigour and fire of youth to Mr. George Catcott, being sensible that he is most in want of it.

*Item.* From the same charitable motive, I give and bequeath unto the Reverend Mr. Camplin senior, all my humility; to Mr. Burgum all my prosody, and grammar,—likewise one moiety of my modesty; the other moiety to any young lady who can

prove without blushing, that she wants that valuable commodity. To Bristol, all my spirit and disinterestedness; parcels of goods unknown on her quay since the days of Canning and Rowley! 'Tis true a charitable gentleman, one Mr. Colston, smuggled a considerable quantity of it, but it being proved that he was a papist, the Worshipful Society of Aldermen endeavoured to throttle him with the Oath of Allegiance. I leave also my religion to Dr. Cutts Barton, Dean of Bristol, hereby empowering the sub-sacrist to strike him on the head when he goes to sleep in church. My powers of utterance I give to the Reverend Mr. Broughton, hoping he will employ them to a better purpose than reading lectures on the immortality of the soul. I leave the Reverend Mr. Catcott some little of my free-thinking that he may put on the spectacles of Reason, and see how vilely he is duped in believing the Scriptures literally. I wish he and his brother George would know how far I am their real enemy; but I have an unlucky way of raillery, and when the strong fit of satire is upon me, I spare neither friend nor foe. This is my excuse for what I have said of them elsewhere. I leave Mr. Clayfield the sincerest thanks my gratitude can give; and I will and direct that, whatever any person may think the pleasure of reading my works worth, they immediately pay their own valuation to him, since it is then become a lawful debt to me, and to him as my executor in this case.

I leave my moderations to the politicians on both sides of the question. I leave my generosity to our present Right Worshipful Mayor, Thomas Harris, Esq. I give my abstinence to the company at the Sheriff's annual feast in general, more particularly the Aldermen.

*Item.* I give and bequeath to Mr. Matthew Mease a mourning ring with this motto, "Alas, poor Chatterton!" provided he pays for it himself. I leave the young ladies all the letters they have had from me, assuring them that they need be under no apprehensions from the appearance of my ghost, for I die for none of them.—*Item.* I leave all my debts, the whole not five pounds, to the payment of the charitable and generous Chamber of Bristol, on penalty, if refused, to hinder every member from a good dinner by appearing in the form of a bailiff. If in defiance of this terrible spectre, they obstinately persist in refusing to discharge any debts, let my two creditors apply to

the Supporters of the Bill of Rights.—*Item.* I leave my mother and sister to the protection of my friends, if I have any.

Executed in the presence of Omniscience this 14th of April, 1770.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

*Codicil.*

It is my pleasure that Mr. Cocking and Miss Farley print this my Will the first Saturday after my death.—T. C.

N.B.—In a dispute concerning the character of David, Mr. —— argued that he must be a holy man, from the strains of piety that breathed through his whole works. I being of a contrary opinion, and knowing that a great genius can effect anything; endeavouring in the foregoing Poems[1] to represent an enthusiastic Methodist, intended to send it to Romaine, and impose it upon the infatuated world as a reality; but thanks to Burgum's generosity, I am now employed in matters of more importance.

Saturday, April 20th, 1770.

It will have been seen that in Barrett's account of his interview with Chatterton, after Lambert had shown him the letter to Clayfield, he states that he told the

[1] It is unknown what poems are referred to; they are probably lost, although in vol. i. of Professor Skeat's edition of Chatterton's Works it is *suggested* that the reference is to certain lines in the poet's "Journal Sixth" at p. 42, and in "The Methodist" at p. 162 of the edition in question; but this does not appear probable, having regard to the nature of those poems. Chatterton's confession of having intended to impose his lines "upon an infatuated world as a reality" is extremely suggestive, as coming from the author of the Rowley Manuscripts. The concluding allusion to Burgum is probably sarcastic, and the "matters of more importance," if really intended for anything definite, may refer to his "Will and Testament" the making which, if to be regarded seriously, would be of more importance than any other undertaking its author could have engaged in.

youth that he deemed the "bad company and principles he had adopted" were to be blamed for his projected "horrible crime of self-murder," yet it does not seem improbable that the surgeon's company and principles were the leading influences that had worked upon the lad's mind. Until Chatterton had mixed in "polite society," and had heard and read the current views on politics and creeds, his opinions of things were formed upon what he had been taught at Colston's. His earliest verses were of the orthodox Church of England type, and when he burst forth into satire, it was the Nonconformist who had to bear the brunt of his boyish indignation. His earliest reading was devoted to such works as would have gained the approbation of even Mr. Colston, a man whose antipathy to all forms of dissent was monomaniacal. It is recorded of him that, learning a chaplain to Colston's Hospital had given his vote to a dissenter during a parliamentary election, the affair was regarded by Colston as a horrible scandal; and he refused all further intercourse with such a person as "no sound son of the Church."

Wesley, Whitfield, and their followers were the first objects of Chatterton's boyish sarcasm, but when his views were broadened by mixing with more educated people and after discussing with such men of the world as Barrett and his circle the usual problems of life, he rushed to the other extreme, and with "Reason" only for a guide revelled in all the unorthodox controversies of an age which culminated in the extravagances of the French Revolution. Only a short interval separated the boyish writer of hymns

on "Christmas Day" and of the "Resignation" from the youthful author of the "Epistle to the Rev. A. Catcott;" "The Defence," and various versified laudatory expositions of deism, and other advanced forms of dissent from Christianity, and who summed up "The Articles of the Belief of me, Thomas Chatterton," in these terms :—

That God is incomprehensible. It is not required of us to know the mysteries of the Trinity, &c., &c., &c.

That it matters not whether a man is a Pagan, Turk, Jew, or Christian, if he acts according to the religion he professes.

That if a man lives a good, moral life, he is a Christian.

That the stage is the best school of morality. And

That the Church of Rome (some tricks of priestcraft excepted) is certainly the true Church.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.[1]

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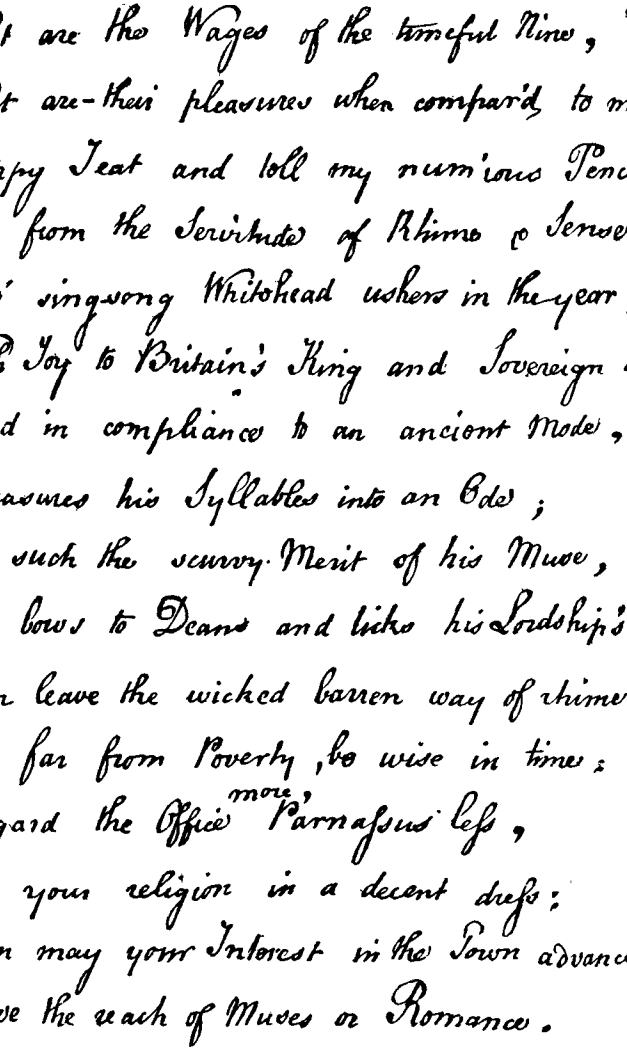
[1] The manuscript containing the above confession of faith is now in the British Museum, and affords signs of having been carried about for some time in its author's pocket.

## CHAPTER X

### THE LAND OF PROMISE

WITH the strong imagination of youth Chatterton was convinced that he could make a career for himself in London by means of his literary labour. To live by literature, as a literary man amongst literary men, was the dream of his life. He fancied it was a life of freedom! That he might not be successful did not affect his project: he could not fail. He had declared that man was equal to anything, and that everything might be acquired by diligence; moreover, that man had been sent into the world with arms long enough to reach anything if he could only extend them. With such views failure was regarded as impossible.

Besides, he was already known to several London publishers. In Bristol his political feelings were strongly in favour of the "Patriotic" party, and under this influence he composed and forwarded to the metropolitan journals various satirical pieces. The longest of these productions, "Kew Gardens," consisted of upwards of twelve hundred lines; many of them, however, had already done service in shorter poems. "Kew Gardens," signed as by "Decimus,"


What are the Wages of the tuneful Nine,
What are their pleasures when compar'd to mine.
Happy I eat and loll my num'rous Pens,
Free from the Servitude of Rhime & Sense;
Tho' singsong Whitehead ushers in the year,
With Joy to Britain's King and Sovereign dear:
And in compliance to an ancient Mode,
Measures his Syllables into an Ode;
Yet such the scurvy Merit of his Muse,
He bows to Deans and licks his Lordship's Shoes
Then leave the wicked barren way of rhime,
Fly far from Poverty, be wise in time:
Regard the Office more, Parnassus less,
Put your religion in a decent dress:
Then may your Interest in the Town advance,
Above the reach of Muses or Romance.

*FACSIMILE* OF AN EXTRACT FROM THE MS. OF "KEW GARDENS," BY CHATTERTON.

To face p 199.

was evidently deemed of more than usual importance by its author, as he referred to it, and to no other poem, by name in his "Will." When sending the manuscript of this poem to a London publisher, for publication in the *Middlesex Journal*, it is clearly seen that Chatterton did not expect any pecuniary reward for it. At the end of the manuscript of the first instalment, consisting of about three hundred lines, he wrote to the editorial publisher, "Mr. Edmunds will send the author, Thomas Chatterton, twenty of the Journals, in which the above poem (which I shall continue) shall appear, by the machine, if he thinks proper to put it in; the money shall be paid to his orders."

In "Kew Gardens" Chatterton reflected strongly upon the conduct of some of the highest personages of the realm, as well as upon that of certain Bristolians, who were personally known to him, for having made themselves notorious in their little sphere on behalf of the existing Ministry. It is amusing, not to say ludicrous, at this distance of time to see the names of various local nonentities coupled with and treated as on an equality with the rulers of the land. As yet the lad had no idea of proportion in such things, for in his eyes Bristol and its people evidently represented the British nation.

Other pieces in prose and verse, in a similar strain to "Kew Gardens," followed each other with great rapidity, and were greedily snapped up by the London publishers, who were only too glad to fill their columns with such spicy material on the author's terms. Although various Bristolians were severely dealt with

in some of these pieces, the Barretts, Burgums, Catcotts, *et hoc genus omne*, were only castigated for their real idiosyncrasies and petty foibles, but the chief political personages of the day, the earls, the dukes, and the royal highnesses, were charged with criminal offences and treasonable crimes. No journal of to-day would venture to insert such accusations as were then of daily publication in the newspapers.

There is a fragmentary poem of this period which, owing to the difficulties of deciphering it, has not been included in any edition of Chatterton's works. In such portions as can be read it is seen that the young poet has introduced several leading political personages under various more or less appropriate pseudonyms, such, for example, as "Reynardo," for Fox, but many of these designations hide characters no longer recognisable. From this unpublished poem, the manuscript of which is in the British Museum, the following extracts, taken from a dialogue between Thyrsis and Hobbinol, will be interesting:—

*Thyrsis.* Soon as Aurora decks the East with red,
He hears the fatal news, my Lord is dead.
He starts and looks around with feigned surprise,
Then sinks upon the floor and falt'ring cries,
Dead! Then 'tis time I should be dying too:
What can the Soul without the Body do?
But, ah! 'tis bootless to contend with Fate!
Pray has his Lordship left me any Plate?
My eyes shall never failing tears distill (*sic*),
For peradventure he has made no will,
Thus weeps the member of the Senate House,
Nor from this ( ? ) gains a single Souse.[1]

[1] Misled by Bailey's Dictionary, which gives *sous*, a penny.

Observe, cries Publius, wrinkling up his chin,
How charmingly that single Souse comes in:
(Not in the pocket of the needy Bard;
His hungry Muse can tell that times are hard.)
Thus Publius sounds his praise with thund'ring roar,
Till spent he looks: his theme is heard no more.
Bumbastes now begins his flow'ry style;
O Heliconidos, upon me smile!
And as Apollo, or the Muses bring,
A pail of water from the sacred [spring]!
Come Mulciborus in Ætnean fire;
Now mould my brain and hammer up my lyre.

It is doubtful whether what follows is part of the dialogue, but the whole of the fragment appears to have reference to the death of some distinguished political person. The verses proceed thus:—

Olympian Hermes, Messenger of Love,
Proclaims the dead in realms above.
Harsh Cronidos shall lay his [sceptre] by,
Forget his Juno and return to cry.
Tartarian Gulphs and never ending Pit
Shall sigh in ( ? ) in Sulphur weep by fit.
Saturnidos with sobs shall swill the plain
And weep o'er all the Earth with scalding rain.
Apollo Phœbus shall forsake his Mount,
And on his Lyre the Hero's praise recount:
The blue-eyed maid upon the Athenian shore,
Shall scold the Parcæ like a drunken whore;
Whilst the Parnassidos about their spring,
In verse [Illyrian] shall his praises sing.
The God of War whose father grew in th' Field,
Shall drop a scalding tear upon his Shield:
Affrighted will the Greeks and Trojans run—

*Hobbinol.* No more, good Thyrsis, see the setting sun
Is driving to the West with saffron ray,
To give to other worlds a welcome day.

*Hobbinol.* What if a Bard to swell his [shrunken] purse
Shall seem to weep in Want-dictated verse,
And dress the Idol of their crazy brain
In all the virtues of a [Gracchic] strain;
Lament the fallen Minister of State—
As though a Rogue is good because he's great!
So Puria, when she hears a four hours' toll,
Lamenting cries, "'Tis for some happy soul!"
But when the sexton scarcely tolls the bell,
Mutters unmoved, "Some soul is gone to hell!"

*Thyrsis.* Uncourtly Shepherd, notions such as [thine]
Won't introduce you with my lord to dine.
Don't ask me why I weep the Hero's fate:
I weep like Puria only for the great.
Hobbinol, thy stories are not known to all.—
But now the chilly dew begins to fall;
Let's fold our sheep, and bid adieu to woe . . ."

Another extract, in continuation of the last speaker's oration, runs thus :—

So had not Reynardo stept in to save
His sinking country from the threatening wave
Of France and Papal Power, with dreadful roar
This stream had drenched all Albion's land with gore;
And when he had performed this mighty job,
Damned with a pension, hooted by the mob. . . .

Now for a touch at Ministers of State:
Balarto always at his Levee came,
A Caledonian great in Birth and Fame,
Well versed in every kind of courtiers' Laws;
Could twirl his Lordship's wig, or twist a cause;
With Rusticus he was a stupid log;
With Servilus a flattering, fawning dog;
As pliant wax will any shape retain,
So he conformed to all in hopes of [gain];
Like my lord duke he on Newmarket bets,
And like his lordship never pays his debts;

Can lie like Johnson and with Dodsley pray,
And be a stupid fool with Master Day.

It will be noticed that with the forwardness of youth eager to display a knowledge of forbidden things, the young bard ventures in some of his satires to introduce topics of a nature tabooed nowadays, but there does not appear to be the slightest basis for or probability of the suggestion that Chatterton was leading a dissipated life. His companion, Thistlethwaite, from whose narrative extracts have already been made, with reference to some objectionable passages in the lad's writings, remarks with much reason :—

"I believe them to have originated rather from a warmth of imagination, aided by a vain affectation of singularity, than from any natural depravity or from a heart vitiated by evil example. The opportunities a long acquaintance with him afforded me, justify me in saying that while he lived in Bristol he was not the debauched character represented. Temperate in his living, moderate in his pleasures, and regular in his exercises, he was undeserving of the aspersion."

Chatterton's temperate habits are fully testified to by all who had intimate acquaintance with him, and he himself, writing to Barrett, at a most critical moment of his life, with all evident sincerity declares : "I keep no worse company than *myself*; I never drink to excess, and have, without vanity, too much sense to be attached to the mercenary retailers of iniquity." Rarely, if ever, had the poor boy the means, had he had the inclination to play the voluptuary : in truth, he carried his ideas of abstinence

to a hurtful extent, contenting himself with bread and water, even forgoing these when he had something of importance to do, saying that "he had work on hand and must not make himself more stupid than God had made him." The scantiness of his diet was noticed not only at Bristol, but at his lodgings in London, and anything objectionable in his behaviour would speedily have been discovered and commented upon in either city. Like most men of a highly poetic temperament, like Burns, Byron, Poe, and others, Chatterton not only told the public his deeds and thoughts upon matters he should have kept silent about, but like those men he was apt to exaggerate his real faults, and confess his guilt of fancied misdeeds, boasting of crimes he had never committed.

The most important action in Chatterton's short life was now impending. After having prepared the way for his capture of the London publishing market, as has already been explained, the lad left Bristol for London on or about April 24, 1770. Hitherto he had never been further away from home than a holiday walk on his Saturday half-day leaves of absence. The journey must have been in every respect a most momentous one for him, as well as a sad parting for his mother. According to Barrett, the means for enabling Chatterton to journey to the metropolis was obtained by subscription, "most of his friends and acquaintances contributing a guinea each towards his journey." When the few persons there can have been able and willing to subscribe even that small sum each is taken into consideration,

it will appear as if the five guineas estimated by one of the boy's biographers as the amount collected must have been well within the limit.

Chatterton appears to have reached the metropolis, by means of the slow-going coach of those days, about five o'clock in the afternoon of April 25th. In his first letter home to his mother he gives an amusing and characteristic description of his journey. Heading his communication "London, April 26, 1770," he writes:—

DEAR MOTHER,—Here I am, safe, and in high spirits.—To give you a journal of my tour would not be unnecessary. After riding in the basket to Brislington, I mounted the top of the coach, and rid easy; and was agreeably entertained with the conversation of a quaker *in dress*, but little so in personals and behaviour. This laughing Friend, who is a carver, lamented his having sent his tools Worcester, as otherwise he would have accompanied me to London. I left him at Bath; when, finding it rained pretty fast I entered an inside passage to Speenhamland, the halfway stage, paying seven shillings. 'Twas lucky I did so, for it snowed all night, and on Marlborough Downs the snow was near a foot high.

At seven in the morning I breakfasted at Speenhamland, and then mounted the coach-box for the remainder of the day, which was a remarkably fine one. Honest gee-hoo complimented me with assuring me, that I sat bolder and tighter than any person who ever rid with him.—Dined at Stroud most luxuriantly, with a young gentleman who had slept all the preceding night in the machine; and an old mercantile genius, whose schoolboy son had a great deal of wit, as the father thought, in remarking that Windsor was as old as *our Saviour's time.*

Got into London about five in the evening.

Called upon Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Fell, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Dodsley.—Great encouragement from them; all approved of my design;—shall soon be settled.—Call upon Mr. Lambert;

show him this or tell him, if I deserve a recommendation, he would oblige me to give me one—if I do not, it will be beneath him to take notice of me. Seen all aunts, cousins, all well—and I am welcome.

Mr. T. Wensley is alive, and coming home.—Sister, grandmother, &c., &c., &c., remember.

I remain,
Your dutiful Son,
T. CHATTERTON.

The keynote of the whole matter is struck with the sentence, "Here I am, safe, and in high spirits." In London and free! Free, and for the first time in his life his own master! Able and willing to follow the dictates of his own inclination! He has lost no time upon his arrival, and *if* his own words are to be accepted literally, he has already visited and has been well received by and obtained verbal encouragement from his chief London correspondents, all editors and publishers, including the great Mr. Dodsley himself.

The Chattertons had various relatives in London, amongst whom was a Mrs. Ballance, apparently a widow, who lodged in Shoreditch, at the house of some people named Walmsley. The family consisted of the father, a plasterer, his wife, a niece aged about seventeen, and a nephew of about fourteen. Walmsley was a tenant of Sir Herbert Croft, the first biographer of Chatterton, and seems to have been a hard-working, decent, good-natured working man, but, of course, neither he nor any one of his family was able to comprehend the new member of their household. Although Chatterton tells his mother in his

second letter home that he lodges in one of Mr. Walmsley's best rooms, he omits to inform her, what must have been somewhat annoying to his pride, and inconvenient for his nocturnal literary pursuits, that he had to share the room and sleep with Walmsley's young nephew.

He seems to have really received encouragement and, apparently, commissions for some work to be done from the publishers, all of whom knew him already by name, although they must have been extremely surprised at his youth when he appeared. It will be remembered that he had quite recently forwarded the first portion of a long poem, "Kew Gardens," to Edmunds, publisher of the *Middlesex Journal*, who knew that he was "Decimus," a second kind of "Junius" in his way; Fell, editor and printer of the *Freeholder's Magazine*, who also belonged to the "Patriot" party, had issued pieces of Chatterton's in his publication, whilst the lad had been a constant contributor of miscellaneous kinds of matter to Hamilton's *Town and Country Magazine*, so that he did not come to them unknown or unrecommended.

He must have taken a collection of manuscripts to London with him, chiefly consisting of literary and political essays, and a few poems of the satirical type. Although poetry was, evidently, of no more pecuniary value in the capital than it was in the provinces, he could not refrain from beginning with the manufacture of verse. Apparently, the piece of his to be first published after his arrival in town was "The Candidates," issued in the *Middlesex Journal* of

May 1st, but dated Bristol, April 27, 1770. This poem, which has not yet appeared in any collection of Chatterton's works, is as follows:—

Mad'ning for popularity and place,
The Marquis takes instructions from his Grace;
Learns how his ancestor in favour trod,
And served himself, his country, and his God:
Went through the labour of a college lord
And stampt his many virtues on record.
Fir'd with the tale, he listens to the tongue
Where once a flower of rhetoric was hung;
Catches the shadow of the honoured seat,
Will serve his country well, but never treat;
High in the favour of the ruling powers,
Maitland to honorary glory towers
Happy in accent, dignity and air,
The Princess marks him for the empty chair.
Can he refuse it, when the promised prize
Of future earldoms dance before his eyes?
No, Maitland, no; thy virtue cannot stand
Against the magic of a lib'ral hand;
Thy stubborn virtue which could never move
To pow'r or favour, must be thaw'd by Love.
Come, Burnaby; come on, and let us see
The soul of Cato actuating thee;
As Plato's spirit once was said to pass
From Carteret's venal carcass to an ass.
"Rest on our honours;" thro' the town 'tis known,
Thou hast a weak supporter in thy own.
No invitation will recall thee now,
Though Dowagers may nod, and Barons bow.
Self-nominated, self-supported stand,
The tool of mischief, in a woman's hand.
Drink thy own porter; rest upon thy self;
Enjoy thy Chelsea, infamy and pelf.
Sir Robert comes; all others die away,
Like glimm'ring tapers at approach of day.

On the 6th of May Chatterton wrote his second letter home from Shoreditch. In informing his mother of the various engagements he had secured, he deems that his political influence has already become something of importance and that his position is good. "What a glorious prospect!" exclaims the poor bedazzled lad, forgetful of his noble ideals, of his Rowley and his Canynges, all obscured by the paltry present:—

DEAR MOTHER,—I am surprised that no letter has been sent in answer to my last. I am settled, and in such a settlement as I would desire. I get four guineas a month by one Magazine: shall engage to write a History of England, and other pieces, which will more than double that sum. Occasional essays for the daily papers would more than support me. What a glorious prospect! Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here. I shall visit him next week, and by his interest will insure Mrs. Ballance the Trinity-House. He affirmed that what Mr. Fell had of mine could not be the writings of a youth; and expressed a desire to' know the author. By the means of another bookseller I shall be introduced to Townshend and Sawbridge. I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee-house, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary; an author carries his character in his pen. My sister will improve herself in drawing. My grandmother is, I hope, well. Bristol's mercenary walls were never destin'd to hold me—there, I was out of my element, now I am in it—London! Good God! how superior is London to that despicable place, Bristol! Here is none of your little meannesses, none of your mercenary securities, which disgrace that miserable hamlet. Dress, which is in Bristol an eternal fund of scandal, is here only introduced as a subject of taste; if a man dresses well, he has taste; if careless, he has his own reasons for so doing, and is prudent. Need I remind you of the contrast? The poverty of authors is a common observation, but not always a true one. No author can be poor who

understands the arts of booksellers. Without this necessary knowledge, the greatest genius may starve; and with it, the greatest dunce live in splendour. This knowledge I have pretty well dipped into. The Levant man of war, in which T. Wensley went out, is at Portsmouth; but no news from him yet. I lodge in one of Mr. Walmsley's best rooms. Let Mr. Cary copy the letters on the other side and give them to the persons for whom they are designed, if not too much labour for him.

I remain, your's, &c.,

T. CHATTERTON.

PS.—I have some trifling presents for my mother, sister, Thorne, &c.

Sunday Morning.

*For Mr. T. Cary.*

I have sent you a task. I hope no unpleasing one. Tell all your acquaintance for the future to read the *Freeholder's Magazine*. When you have anything for publication, send it to me, and it shall most certainly appear in some periodical compilation. Your last piece was, by the ignorance of a corrector, jumbled under the considerations in the acknowledgments. But I rescued it, and insisted on its appearance.

Your friend,

T. C.

Direct for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster-row.

*Mr. Henry Kator.*

If you have not forgot Lady Betty, any Complaint, Rebus, or Enigma, on the dear charmer, directed for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Pater-noster-row—shall find a place in some Magazine or other; as I am engaged in many.

Your friend,

T. CHATTERTON.

*Mr. William Smith.*

When you have any poetry for publication, send it to me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Pater-noster-row, and it shall most certainly appear.

Your friend,

T. C.

*Mrs. Baker.*

The sooner I see you the better—send me as soon as possible Rymsdyk's address. (Mr. Cary will leave this at Mr. Flower's, Small Street.)

*Mr. Mason.*

Give me a short prose description of the situation of Nash—and the poetic addition shall appear in some Magazine. Send me also whatever you would have published, and direct for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Pater-noster-row.

Your friend,
T. CHATTERTON.

*Mr. Mat. Mease.*

Begging Mr. Mease's pardon for making public use of his name lately—I hope he will remember me, and tell all his acquaintance to read the *Freeholder's Magazine* for the future.

T. CHATTERTON.

In another postscript Mr. Cary is desired to tell Messrs. Thaire, Gaster (Baster?), A. Broughton, J. Broughton, Williams, Rudhall, Thomas, Carty, Hanmer, Vaughan, Ward, Kalo (Kator?), Smith, &c. &c., to read the *Freeholder's Magazine.*

As regards the general contents of the lad's letters home it is indeed probable that Wilkes, *if he did really say anything about Chatterton's writings*, would be incredulous as to them being the work of a youth, but it is equally certain that he would not have done anything for Mrs. Ballance at the Trinity House, even if he could; and it is not very likely that Aldermen Townshend and Sawbridge would have been interviewed by the lad. These City dignitaries were as difficult to get at as Royalty itself. In other respects his letter is pleasant reading: it shows how the lad's heart has not been deadened by his intellect,

pride, or selfish pleasures. He thinks so much about the need of those at home, about his sister's education and his grandmother's health, whilst he does not fail to remind them that he has presents for all.

Chatterton's enclosures for his various Bristolian acquaintances are not only intended to show them that he remembered them but are to prove to them how very influential he has become in the literary world of London. It is to be hoped that all his acquaintances did not comply with his request and forward him their manuscripts, especially his friend William Smith, who poured forth verse by the mile, or he would have been overwhelmed. The notes Cary was asked to copy were, of course, included in the letter to his mother to save the heavy postage charged in those days for each separate enclosure or letter.

The knowledge obtainable of Chatterton's doings in London is mainly derivable from his letters home, supplemented by the sidelights thrown on his habits and actions by the information furnished to Sir Herbert Croft by the Walmsleys. Fortunately, Croft, being Walmsley's landlord, was able to elicit thoroughly all the information the plasterer and his family could furnish about Chatterton whilst their memories were still fresh on the subject. With the aid of this material it is possible to construct an approximate picture of the poet's life in London. Totally unacquainted with the great metropolis and its people, and devoid of all knowledge of the so-called "upper classes" and their ways, this aspiring youth, this ambitious apprentice boy, comes to the capital

city of the kingdom, to earn fame and fortune by lecturing statesmen and reprimanding Royalty, and to accomplish all this he takes up his abode with a plasterer in the unknown regions of Shoreditch, whilst sharing the bed of a young, probably uneducated mechanic, and the board of a poor widow.

The household, where he had one of their "best rooms," appears to have consisted of honest, hard-working people, and upon them the young lodger seems to have made a favourable impression. The recorder of their reminiscences and opinions furnishes their information in their own words, and no better plan can be followed than repeating them.

Mrs. Ballance, who was related to Chatterton in some unknown way, had persuaded the Walmsleys to accept him as a lodger. She describes him "as proud as Lucifer," says he quarrelled with her for calling him "Cousin *Tommy*," asking her if she had ever heard of a poet being called "*Tommy*." She assured him she "knew nothing of poets and only wished he would not set up for a gentleman." When he had been in London for two or three weeks Mrs. Ballance recommended him to get a situation in some office, upon which "he stormed about the room like a madman, and frightened her not a little, by telling her, he hoped, with the blessing of God, very soon to be sent prisoner to the Tower, which would make his fortune."

Mr. Walmsley's report was that there was "something manly and pleasing about him, and that he did not dislike the wenches," which was supplemented by Mrs. Walmsley's statement that "she never saw any

harm of him—he never *mislisted* her." He "was always very civil, whenever they met in the house by accident; that he would never suffer the room, in which he used to read and write, to be swept, because he said 'poets hated brooms.' She told him she did not know anything poet-folks were good for, but to sit in a dirty cap and gown in a garret, and at last to be starved; that during the nine weeks he was at her house he never stayed out after the family hours, except once, when he did not come home all night, and had been, she heard, 'poetting' a song about the streets." That night, Mrs. Ballance said, she knows he lodged at a relation's, because Mr. Walmsley's house was shut up when he came home.

The plasterer's niece said, for her part, she always took Chatterton "more for a mad boy than for anything else, he would have such flights and vagaries;" and that "but for his face and her knowledge of his age, she should never have thought him a boy, he was so manly, and *so much himself*." "No woman came after him, nor did she know of any connexion; but still he was a sad rake, and terribly fond of women, and would sometimes be saucy to her. He ate what he chose to have with his relation, Mrs. Ballance, who lodged in the house, but he never touched meat, and drank only water, and seemed to live on the air." She added that he was good-tempered and agreeable and obliging, but sadly proud and haughty; nothing was too good for him, nor was anything to be too good for his grandmother, mother and sister hereafter. "He had such a proud spirit as to send the china, &c.," to be mentioned in his letter

home of the 8th of July, "to his grandmother, &c., at a time when the niece knew he was almost in want. He used to sit up almost all night reading and writing. . . . Her brother said he was afraid to lie with him; for, to be sure, he was a *spirit*, and never slept; for he never came to bed till it was morning, and then, for what he saw, never closed his eyes."

Chatterton's bedfellow, during the first six weeks he lodged there, says that "notwithstanding his pride and haughtiness, it was impossible to help liking him; that he lived chiefly upon a bit of bread, or a tart, and some water; but he once or twice saw him take a sheep's tongue out of his pocket. Chatterton, to his knowledge, never slept while they lay together; that he never came to bed till very late, sometimes three or four o'clock, and was always awake when he [the nephew] waked; and got up at the same time, about five or six. Almost every morning the floor was covered with pieces of paper not so big as sixpences, into which he had torn what he had been writing before he came to bed." "In short, they all agree," says Croft, "that no one would have taken him, from his behaviour, &c., to have been a poor boy, and a sexton's [*sic*] son. They never saw such another person before nor since; he appeared to have something wonderful about him. They say he gave no reason for quitting their house. They found the floor of his room covered with little pieces of paper, the remains of his 'poettings,' as they term it."

All this time Chatterton was indeed busy with his pen, whether by night or by day, writing those essays which might, as he told Mrs. Ballance, get him sent

as a prisoner to the Tower; or, as he told his mother in his next letter home, get him tried by the House of Lords, as he said Edmunds, one of his publishers, was, and sent to Newgate. And he was still hankering after "poettings," although without his glossary of old words he did not seem confident enough to resuscitate any more Rowleys. Amongst the unknown and unedited versifications of this period are the following lines, "To the Society at Spring Gardens," published in the *Middlesex Journal*:—

To you, by genius prompted to display,
That what was darkness now refines to day:
To you whose skilful exhibitions show
How little royal favour can bestow.
To you an Englishman presumes to send
The warmest wishes of a real friend.
Whilst blushing for the errors of his K——
He dares the praise, which worth deserves to sing.
When adverse parties claim the public eye,
And in their gildings with your pictures vie:
Whilst execrable daubings sickly shine
With ornaments of gold and frames divine.
Gods! what a murmur of applauding joy
Hums thro' the crew, and elevates the toy;
Whilst the vile artist, conscious of his fame,
Pilfers his reputation from the frame.
Allow it, no appearance of design,
No composition, no strong colouring shine,
In all the group which nauseates the sight,
Were they not settled in a partial light?
Were not the gildings in the newest taste?
All is complete, and fancifully placed!
You happy artists of this growing isle,
Too, too deserving for the royal smile;
When wretched exhibitions, such as these
Catch approbation, and do more than please.

Your manly elegance of taste and art,
Your noble, rational and glorious part;
Your known superiority of taste
Is not by such absurd neglect disgraced.
The judgment of a K—— may get a name,
But 'tis not patents can ensure us fame.
Search the dull trash, which sharping parsons give,
As comments to instruct us how to live:
These bible murderers, and not these alone,
Can boast a patent patron in the throne.
Dull rascals just, and dreaming writers sing
All by authority, and by the K——.
Then, when the prostituted smile goes down
To all the venal hirelings of the town,
Thank Heaven His M—— has not your taste:
Thank heaven, you are not by his smile disgraced.

May 9, 1770. C.

The lines are nothing wonderful for Chatterton, and refer to some forgotten incident. A few days after the appearance of his versified address to "the Society," the young author wrote the following amusing letter to his mother. The good woman would be more startled than amused at the stately way in which her absent boy addressed her:—

KING'S BENCH, FOR THE PRESENT,
*May* 14, 1770.

DEAR MADAM,—Don't be surprised at the name of the place. I am not here as a prisoner. Matters go on swimmingly: Mr. Fell having offended certain persons, they have set his creditors upon him, and he is safe in the King's Bench. I have been bettered by this accident: his successors in the *Freeholder's Magazine* knowing nothing of the matter, will be glad to engage me, on my own terms. Mr. Edmunds has been tried before the House of Lords, sentenced to pay a fine, and thrown into Newgate. His misfortunes will be to me of no little service. Last week, being in the pit of Drury-Lane

Theatre, I contracted an immediate acquaintance (which you know is no hard task to me) with a young gentleman in Cheapside; partner in a music shop, the greatest in the city. Hearing I could write, he desired me to write a few songs for him: this I did the same night, and conveyed them to him the next morning. These he showed to a Doctor in Music, and I am invited to treat with this Doctor, on the footing of a composer, for Ranelagh and the Gardens. *Bravo, hey boys, up we go!* —Besides the advantage of visiting these expensive and polite places gratis; my vanity will be fed with the sight of my name in copper-plate, and my sister will receive a bundle of printed songs, the words by her brother. These are not all my acquisitions; a gentleman who knows me at the Chapter, as an author, would have introduced me as a companion to the young Duke of Northumberland, in his intended general tour. But, alas! I spake no tongue but my own!—But to return once more to a place I am sickened to write of, Bristol. Though, as an apprentice, none had greater liberties, yet the thoughts of servitude killed me: now I have that for my labour I always reckoned the first of my pleasures, and have still, my liberty. As to the Clearance, I am ever ready to give it; but really I understand so little of the law, that I believe Mr. Lambert must draw it. Mrs. L. brought what you mentioned. Mrs. Hughes is as well as age will permit her to be, and my cousin does very well.

I will get some patterns worth your acceptance, and wish you and my sister would improve yourselves in drawing, as it is here a valuable and never-failing acquisition.—My box shall be attended to; I hope my books are in it—if not, send them; and particularly Catcott's Hutchinsonian jargon on the Deluge, and the MS Glossary, composed of one small book, annexed to a larger.—My sister will remember me to Miss Sandford. I have not quite forgot her; though there are so many pretty milliners, &c., that I have almost forgot myself.—Carty will think on me: upon inquiry I find his trade dwindled into nothing here. A man may very nobly starve by it; but he must have luck indeed, who can live by it.—Miss Rumsey, if she comes to London, would do well as an old acquaintance, to send me her address.—London is not Bristol.—We may patrole the town for a day, without raising one whisper, or nod

of scandal.—If she refuses, the curse of all antiquated virgins light on her: may she be refused when she shall request! Miss Rumsey will tell Miss Baker, and Miss Baker will tell Miss Porter, that Miss Porter's favoured humble servant, though but a *young* man, is a very old lover; and in the eighth and fiftieth year of his age: but that, as Lappet says, is the flower of a man's days; and when a lady can't get a young husband, she must put up with an old bed-fellow. I left Miss Singer, I am sorry to say it, in a very bad way; that is, in a way to be married.—But mum.—Ask Miss Suky Webb the rest; if she knows, she'll tell ye.—I beg her pardon for revealing the secret; but when the knot is fastened, she shall know how I came by it.—Miss Thatcher may depend upon it, that if I am not in love with her, I am in love with nobody else: I hope she is well; and if that whining, sighing, dying pulpit-fop, Lewis, has not finished his languishing lectures, I hope she will see her amoroso next Sunday. If Miss Love has no objection to having a crambo song on her name published, it shall be done.—Begging pardon of Miss Cotton for whatever has happened to offend her, I can assure her it has happened without my consent. I did not give her this assurance when in Bristol, lest it should seem like an attempt to avoid the anger of her *furious* brother. Inquire, when you can, how Miss Broughton received her billet. Let my sister send me a journal of all the transactions of the females within the circle of your acquaintance. Let Miss Watkins know, that the letter she made herself ridiculous by, was never intended for her; but for another young lady in the neighbourhood, of the same name. I promised, before my departure, to write to some hundreds, I believe; but, what with writing for publications, and going to places of public diversion, which is as absolutely necessary to me as food, I find but little time to write to you. As to Mr. Barrett, Mr. Catcott, Mr. Burgum, &c. &c. they rate literary lumber so low, that I believe an author, in their estimation, must be poor indeed! But here matters are otherwise; had Rowley been a Londoner, instead of a Bristowyan, I could have lived by copying his works.—In my humble opinion, I am under very few obligations to any person in Bristol: one, indeed, has obliged me; but as most do, in a manner which makes his obligation no obligation.—My youthful acquaintance

will not take it in dudgeon, that I do not write oftener to them, than I believe I shall: but, as I had the happy art of pleasing in conversation, my company was often liked, where I did not like: and to continue a correspondence under such circumstances, would be ridiculous. Let my sister improve in copying music, drawing, and every thing which requires genius; in Bristol's mercantile style those things may be useless, if not a detriment to her; but here they are highly profitable. Inform Mr. Rhise that nothing shall be wanting, on my part, in the business he was so kind as to employ me in; should be glad of a line from him, to know whether he would engage in the marine department; or spend the rest of his days, safe, on dry ground. Intended waiting on the Duke of Bedford relative to the Trinity House; but his Grace is dangerously ill. My grandmother, I hope, enjoys the state of health I left her in. I am Miss Webb's humble servant. Thorne shall not be forgot, when I remit the small trifles to you. Notwithstanding Mrs. B's not being able to inform me of Mr. Garsed's address, through the closeness of the pious Mr. Ewer, I luckily stumbled upon it this morning.

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Monday Evening.
(Direct for me, at Mr. Walmsley's, at Shoreditch—only.)

Some few remarks in the preceding letter call for notice. It will be seen that Chatterton tells his mother of having contracted "an immediate aquaintance," which, he says, "you know is no hard task for me," thus confirming the contention that naturally he was amiable and attractive, instead of being normally the gloomy and repellant youth some persons have represented him to be. The Doctor of Music to whom his songs were shown, and whom he was invited to treat with, was Dr. Samuel Arnold, the composer, and "the Gardens" he was to write songs for was Marylebone, The upshot of the affair was the production of "The Revenge," a burletta, by

Chatterton, of which more hereafter. The poet's exclamation, "alas, I spake no language but my own!" although literally true, must not be considered as a statement that he did not understand any French, or Latin, as written.

His copy of the Rev. Alexander Catcott's work on "The Deluge" was badly needed, as it contained several of Chatterton's manuscript poems which had not been printed and which he, probably, now saw a prospect of making use of. Eventually this very volume found its way to the Bodleian Library, where it is now preserved. His manuscript Glossary was of still greater importance to him, and it is strange that in his departure from Bristol, however hurriedly it may have been, he had left it behind. It was the secret key, the finger-post to "the Rowley Romance," containing as it did all the mediæval words, with their modern meanings, which he had so carefully extracted from Bailey, from Speght and others, and without which he does not seem to have been able to produce any transcripts from his cabinet of antiquities.

Chatterton's words home about the many girls he seemed to have been acquainted with prove that they were only acquaintances; that they must have been respectable girls, or he would not have named them to his mother as he did; and that above all he was still fancy free, at least as regards all of them. Probably, his mother, in her letters to him, must have reported something which had been said about his indebtedness to certain persons in Bristol to have drawn from him the words, "In my humble opinion

I am under very few obligations to any person in Bristol: one, indeed, has obliged me; but as most do, in a manner which makes his obligation no obligation." His anxiety to impress upon his mother, whose communications may have been sent with a somewhat humble direction, that letters should be addressed to him at Shoreditch, and not to the Chapter Coffee-House, where his literary and other new London acquaintances might see them, is comprehensible. And, doubtless, they would often reach him much sooner at the Walmsleys, where he was every night and day, than at a popular Coffee-House, where it might not always be convenient for him to make his appearance.

By this time the enthusiastic but continually disappointed young author had begun to discover the difficulty of living by the product of his pen. In his next letter home, to his sister, it can be seen how thoroughly he had found out the impossibility of existing, even in his thrifty way, by his political writings, and by the records in the pocket-book given him by his sister when he left home, in which he kept his miniature cash account, it will be palpable to every one how grossly he was robbed, and how his boyish inexperience was taken advantage of by the men he wrote for. This pitiful record of her brother was eventually presented to Joseph Cottle by Mrs. Newton, in grateful acknowledgment of the sum of money he handed to her as a first payment out of the profits on her brother's works, as edited by Southey and Cottle. In his two-volume collection of his own literary odds and ends, issued in 1829,

Cottle set forth a statement which he asserted was a copy of the cash entries made in the pocket-book by Chatterton, but as Cottle's account differs widely from the real entries made, it is desirable that a proper transcript of them should be given. By the generous permission of the Committee of the Bristol Museum, in whose possession this most interesting relic of the young poet now is, the following memoranda are furnished :—

| Week 17. | Memorandums, &c. Amount of Monies Received. April 24th to May 7th. | £ | s. | d. | Lent. £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | May 2d. | | | | | | |
| | Of Mr. Hamilton for | | | | | | |
| | Candidate and Foreign | | | | | | |
| | Intel. | | 2 | 0 | | | |
| | Of Mr. Fell for Resigned (*sic*) | | 10 | 6 | | | 6 |
| | Court and City *gratis* | | | | | | |
| | London Magaz. | | | | | | |
| | Middlesex Journal | | | | | | |
| | 9th. London Packet. | | 8 | 6 | | | |
| | Of Mr. Fell | | | | | | |
| | Middlesex Journal. | " | " | " | | | |
| | 16th. Songs | | | | | | |
| | Mr. Hamilton[1] | | 10 | 6 | | | |

Of course, Cottle must have been mistaken with regard to the last entry, although he has been copied by all later biographers, including Professor Wilson, who naturally falls on to Mr. Hamilton for making a tool of the inexperienced youth, and paying him

[1] Cottle printed this item as "Mr. Hamilton, for 16 *Songs*, 10s. 6d.," and made some very strong animadversions upon it, but, as the Rev. Arthur Robins, of Matlock, has pointed out, the entry should read as shown above.

rather less than eightpence each for sixteen songs. Wretched and scandalous as Chatterton's so-called remuneration was, as the statement above proves, it could scarcely have been quite so disgraceful. Besides, sixteen songs is a strange purchase, and rapid and fluent as Chatterton was, he could scarcely have produced so many lyrics at that time, when he was writing prose by the yard.

A second leaf in the pocket-book carries the tell-tale account on thus:—

| Amount of Monies. | Received. | | | Lent. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. |
| Recd. to May 23 of Mr. Hamilton for Middlesex | 1 | 11 | 6 | | 2 | 0 |
| *Due from others* | 10 | 17 | 6 | | 1 | 6 |
| Recd. of B. | 1 | 2 | 3 | — | — | — |
| Of Fell for Consuliad | | 10 | 6 | | | |

It would be deeply interesting to have had the account up to the end of his career, as it would have thrown light upon his real pecuniary position, but, as it is, there could but have been displayed terrible poverty and all its attendant misery. For his first month in London it will be seen that his total receipts were only £4 15s. 9d., including the £1 2s. 3d. credited to the anonymous Mr. B. (Barrett?). On the 6th of July he received five guineas from Mr. Atterbury, for the copyright of "The Revenge," and, possibly, he obtained other smaller sums elsewhere during the remainder of his laborious life in London; but it is seen that he immediately expended a considerable

portion of the money paid for his burletta in the purchase of presents for the loved ones at home, whilst there is every reason to believe that no part of the £10 17s. 6d. "due from others" ever came to him. The small sums lent scarcely call for comment: they must have been given to those as poor as the lender.

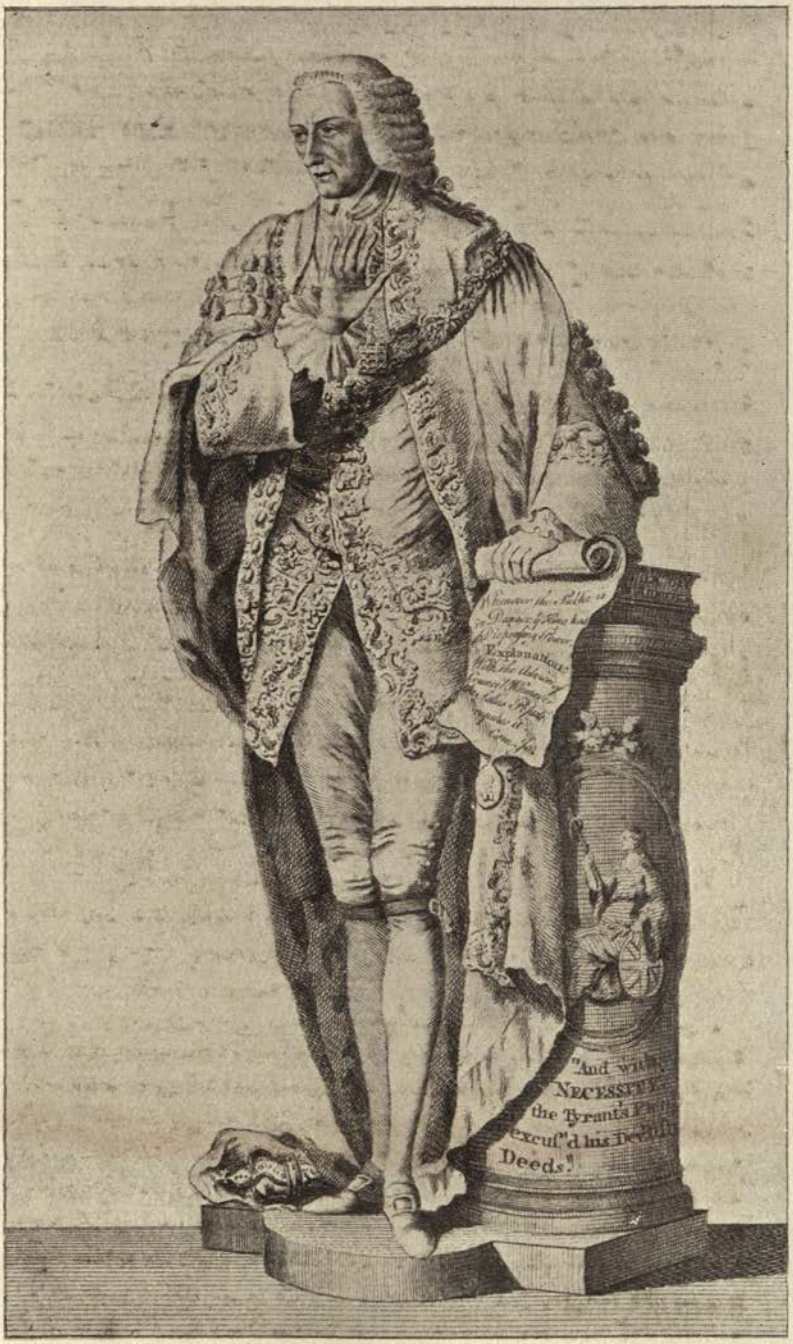
The memorandum-book, apparently a Lady's Pocket Book for 1769, also contains a record of the various political letters Chatterton wrote whilst in the metropolis. This list is valuable as proving which of the letters ascribed to him are really his, and which of them are not, amongst the latter being those attributed to his pen by Horace Walpole, who based some of his bitterest libels on the unfortunate youth upon this imputed authorship; upon the letters which no one but Walpole ever heard of or knew anything about!

Chatterton's next letter home, written to his sister, and dated May 30, 1770, is addressed from Tom's Coffee-House, in those days a well-known place of resort for literary men. It runs thus:—

TOM'S COFFEE-HOUSE, *May 30th*, 1770.

DEAR SISTER,—There is such a noise of business and politicks in the room, that my inaccuracy in writing here is highly excusable. My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort. To begin with, what every female conversation begins with, dress: I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company; this last article always brings me interest. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a Lord (a Scotch one indeed), who is going to advance pretty deeply into the bookselling branches: I shall have lodging and boarding, genteel and elegant, gratis: this article, in the quarter of the town he

lives, with worse accommodations, would be £50 per annum. I shall have, likewise, no inconsiderable premium; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage: I will send you two silks this summer; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in numbers the beginning of the next winter. As this will not, like writing political essays, oblige me to go to the coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry, and every collegiate church near; not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me expensive. The Manuscript Glossary I mentioned in my last must not be omitted. If money flowed as fast upon me as honours I would give you a portion of £5,000. You have doubtless heard of the Lord Mayor's remonstrating and addressing the King: but it will be a piece of news to inform you that I have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received; perhaps better than it deserved; and I waited on his Lordship to have his approbation to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could; and warmly invited me to call on him again. The rest is a secret.—But the devil of the matter is, there is no money to be got on this side of the question. Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author, who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and if I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party. I might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrook, an East India Director, as qualified for an office no ways despicable; but I shall not take a step to the sea, whilst I can continue on land. I went yesterday to Woolwich to see Mr. Wensley; he is paid to-day. *The artillery is no unpleasant sight, if we bar reflection and do not consider how much mischief it may do.* Greenwich Hospital and St. Paul's Cathedral are the only structures which could reconcile me to any thing out of the Gothic. Mr. Carty will hear from me soon: multiplicity of literary business must be my excuse. I condole with him, and my dear Miss Sandford, in the misfortunes of Mrs. Carty: my physical advice is, to leech her temples plenti-




WILLIAM BECKFORD, LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

From an engraving of Moore's statue.

To face p. 226.

fully : keep her very low in diet; as much in the dark as possible. Nor is this last prescription the advice of an old woman : whatever hurts the eyes, affects the brain : and the particles of light, when the sun is in the summer signs, are highly prejudicial to the eyes; and it is from this sympathetic effect, that the head-ache is general in summer. But, above all, talk to her but little, and never contradict her in anything. This may be of service. I hope it will. Did a paragraph appear in your paper of Saturday last, mentioning the inhabitants of London's having opened another view of St. Paul's; and advising the corporation, or vestry of Redcliffe, to procure a more complete view of Redclift Church? My compliments to Miss Thatcher : if I am in love I am; though the devil take me if I can tell with whom it is. I believe I may address her in the words of Scripture, which no doubt she reveres; "If you had not ploughed with my heifer," (or bullock rather) "you had not found out my riddle." Humbly thanking Miss Rumsey for her complimentary expression, I cannot think it satisfactory. Does she, or does she not, intend coming to London? Mrs. O'Coffin has not yet got a place; but there is not the least doubt but she will in a little time.

Essay-writing has this advantage, you are sure of constant pay; and when you have once wrote a piece which makes the author enquired after, you may bring the booksellers to your own terms. Essays on the patriotic side fetch no more than what the copy is sold for. As the patriots themselves are searching for a place, they have no gratuities to spare. So says one of the beggars, in a temporary alteration of mine, in the "Jovial Crew":—

A patriot was my occupation,
It got me a name but no pelf:
Till, starv'd for the good of the nation,
I begg'd for the good of myself.
Fal, lal, &c.

I told them, if 'twas not for me,
Their freedoms would all go to pot;
I promis'd to set them all free,
But never a farthing I got.
Fal, lal, &c.

On the other hand, unpopular essays will not even be accepted, and you must pay to have them printed; but then you seldom lose by it. Courtiers are so sensible of their deficiency in merit, that they generally reward all who know how to daub them with the appearance of it. To return to private affairs.—Friend Slude may depend upon my endeavouring to find the publications you mention. They publish the *Gospel Magazine* here. For a whim I write in it. I believe there are not any sent to Bristol; they are hardly worth the carriage—methodistical and unmeaning. With the usual ceremonies to my mother and grandmother; and sincerely, without ceremony, wishing them both happy; when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so; and with my kind remembrance to Miss Webb and Miss Thorne,

I remain, as I ever was,

Yours, &c. to the end of the chapter,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

PS. I am at this moment pierced through the heart by the black eye of a young lady, driving along in a hackney-coach. I am quite in love: if my love lasts till that time, you shall hear of it in my next.

Much in this letter must be accepted with reserve, for, despite his character for veracity, it is to be feared that the youth was deceiving the dear ones at home as to his position and earnings. Much of what he describes in this letter, and in his other letters, for the matter of that, was, doubtless, as visionary and illusive as Rowley and his surroundings. Can it be believed that the poor lad who was subsisting on bread and water, varied only by an occasional banquet on a sheep's tongue, and whose earnings are computed to have been, even taking matters at the best, only a pound a week, was "dressing fashionably and getting into good company," was engaged to be companion to the brother of a well-off lord, and was about to

undertake journeys to various cathedral towns? His visit to the Lord Mayor and his lordship's warm invitation to call again appear scarcely as real as Canynges's compliments to Rowley. All these statements have been accepted as facts by the biographers, and may have deluded his relatives, but surely men of the world should know better. There is no little difficulty for the well-groomed and substantial-looking person to interview these high and mighty men, much more for a poor provincial lad who had not so much as committed anything criminal enough to justify a presentation to the chief magistrate of the first city in the world. It can scarcely be doubted but that the lad drew upon his imagination when telling the anxious ones at home of his great deeds and grand acquaintances.

More probability is apparent when Chatterton returns to his literary experiences, and then one is permitted to see where the shoe pinches. Money is scarce although honours are plentiful. There is no money to be got out of the "patriotic" party, and "as the patriots themselves are searching for a place, they have no gratuities to spare." How different it all is from the good old days of Rowley and Canynges! How the glare of London life shows up all the seamy side even for this poor lad! A little of the Bristol boy breaks out now and then, as when he gives free "physical" advice for Mrs. Carty, and when he so sincerely wishes his mother and grandmother happy, uttering, as if with a sob in the words, the ever vain aspiration, "when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so."

It is so much better to read of the home life in the Redcliff house or to have the ideal Rowley circle conjured up for us, than to have to wade through all the scandal about Lord Bute and the Dowager Princess, and about Dr. Johnson and his pension, and the hundred and one tales, all more or less lies invented for party purposes, told in prose or verse. Such pieces as "Kew Gardens," "Resignation," and so forth, may even be amongst the best of their kind of writing, but none is of a kind a poet's well-wisher would encourage. The best that can be said of it is that it shows how thoroughly Chatterton could assimilate the tastes of his time and perpetuate them for the diversion of a later age. But Poetry and Politics cannot exist together.

Of course, there are many good lines in such a poem as "Kew Gardens," and many expressions of wonderful worldly discernment for a young provincial lad with only such education as Chatterton had received. It is disputed when "Kew Gardens," its author's longest acknowledged poem, was written, and as Chatterton mentions it in his "Will," it is considered certain that he had composed it before April, 1770, when that document was produced. But "Kew Gardens" is really made up from various shorter pieces, written from time to time, and by slight revisions joined to one another, so that its growth went on for several months. As might be expected, this style of manufacture gives the poem an unequal value; some inserted passages being better and others not so good as the earliest verses. It is curious to discover that discarded portions of the

earliest version of "Kew Gardens," are reproduced in some of Chatterton's later pieces, as if, when his inspiration had failed him, he had resorted to rejected fragments of a more critical period of composition to fill up empty spaces. The opening lines of the poem, having reference to imputed infamy in "high life," are characteristic of Chatterton's political satires, and may be quoted :—

> Hail Kew ! thou darling of the tuneful nine ;
> Thou eating-house of verse, where poets dine ;
> The temple of the idol of the great,
> Sacred to council—mysteries of state.
> Sir Gilbert, oft, in dangerous trials known,
> To make the shame and felony his own,
> Burns incense on thy altars, and presents
> The grateful sound of clamorous discontents.
> In the bold favour of thy goddess vain,
> He brandishes his sword and shakes his chain.
> He knows her secret workings and desires,
> Her hidden attributes and vestal fires ;
> Like an old oak has seen her godhead fall
> Beneath the wild descendant of Fingal,
> And happy in the view of promised store
> Forgot his dignity and held the door.

The old libels and long-forgotten scandals here paraded for the delectation of the poet's readers can scarcely stir the curiosity of any one nowadays, and what is witty is too repugnant to modern taste to justify quotation. Nevertheless, as the production of one so youthful and inexperienced in what is regarded as "life," many passages are interesting as typical of his general knowledge. The aptness of the author's allusions and the wide range of subjects he

refers to are marvellous for one of his age and position. The most amusing feature of these satirical pieces of his is the seriousness with which he couples the notabilities of the metropolis with the nonentities of his native city: in his eyes all men are equal. Any one will serve as a peg on which to hang his pasquinades. Thus, when really desirous of attacking Bristol and the Bristolians, he censures Henry Jones, a local rhymester, author of verses on "Clifton," "Kew Gardens," and other places sung also by Chatterton:—

Thy "Clifton," too! how justly is the them
As much the poet's as his jingling dream.
Who, but a Muse inventive, great, like thine
Could honour Bristol with a nervous line?

. . . . .

Did not thy iron conscience blush to write
This Tophet of the gentle arts polite?
Lost to all learning, elegance and sense,
Long had the famous city told her pence;
Avarice sat brooding in her white-washed cell,
And Pleasure had a hut at Jacob's Well.[1]

. . . . . .

A mean assembly-room, absurdly built,
Boasted one gorgeous lamp of copper gilt,
With farthing candles, chandeliers of tin,
And services of water, rum and gin.
There in the dull solemnity of wigs,
The dancing bears of commerce murder jigs;
Here dance the dowdy belles of crooked trunk
And often, very often, reel home drunk;
Here dance the bucks with infinite delight,
And club to pay the fiddlers for the night,

[1] Where the old Bristol Theatre stood.

While Broderip's hum-drum symphonies of flats
Rival the harmony of midnight cats . . .
With scraps of ballad tunes, and *gude Scotch sangs*
Which god-like Ramsay to his bagpipe twangs,
With tattered fragments of forgotten plays,
With Playford's melody to Sternhold's lays,
This pipe of science, mighty Broderip comes,
And a strange, unconnected jumble thrums.
Roused to devotion in a sprightly air,
Danced into piety, and jigged to prayer;
A modern hornpipe's murder greets our ears,
The heavenly music of domestic spheres.

Sleep spreads his silken wings, and lulled by sound,
The vicar slumbers, and the snore goes round;
Whilst Broderip at his passive organ groans
Through all his slow variety of tones.
How unlike Allen! Allen is divine!
His touch is sentimental, tender, fine;
No little affectations e'er disgraced
His more refined, his sentimental taste:
He keeps the passions with the sound in play,
And the soul trembles with the trembling key.[1]

Unfortunately many of the allusions in these lines are incomprehensible to the general, modern reader, unless he is conversant with the period and persons connected with Chatterton's own story. It may be pointed out that Broderip, upon whose performance Chatterton is so severe, was a Bristol organist who is said to have offended the poet by turning him out of the organ-loft, whilst of Allen the lad was a great admirer, and in a letter to his friend Cary, eulogises him greatly, declaring that what the architect

[1] In Somersetshire "key" is pronounced "kay," and in the poet's time was considered a good rhyme to "play."

of St. Mary Redcliff was in building so Allen is in music, than which no greater praise could probably be given by Chatterton.

Some few lines further on Chatterton has a fling at Dr. Johnson, who appears, through some unknown reason, to have incurred his dislike, so often does he rail at him in his verse :—

> Hail, Inspiration ! whose mysterious wings
> Are strangers to what rigid Johnson sings ;
> By him thy airy voyages are curbed,
> Nor moping wisdom's by thy flight disturbed ;
> To ancient lore and musty precepts bound,
> Thou art forbid the range of fairy ground.
> Irene[1] creeps so classical and dry,
> None but a Greek philosopher can cry ;
> Through five long acts unlettered heroes sleep,
> And critics by the square of learning weep.
> Hark ! what's the horrid bellowing from the stage,
> Oh ! 'tis the ancient chorus of the age ;
> Grown wise, the judgment of the town refines,
> And in a philosophic habit shines ;
> Models each pleasure in scholastic taste,
> And heavenly Greece is copied and disgraced.

A certain dandy divine having disgusted the poet by his fopperies in the pulpit, is thus pilloried :—

> Soft [Robins ?] undeniably a saint,
> Whimpers in accent so extremely faint,
> You see the substance of his empty prayer,
> His nothing to the purpose in his air ;
> His sermons have no arguments, 'tis true,
> Would you have sense and pretty figures too ?

[1] The name of a tragedy by Samuel Johnson.

With what a swimming elegance and ease
He scatters out distorted similes!
It matters not how wretchedly applied,
Saints are permitted to set sense aside.
This oratorial novelty in town
Dies into fame and ogles to renown;
The dowdy damsels of his chosen tribe
Are feed to heaven, his person is the bribe;
All who can superficial talk admire,
His vanity, not beauty, sets on fire.

However, as Chatterton says, "Enough of Robins!" From the Bristol parson the young satirist turns to an English peer and, voicing the views of the multitude, deplores the acceptance of a peerage by the people's favourite, Pitt:—

Chatham, whose patriotic actions wear
One single brand of infamy—the peer;
Whose popularity again thinks fit
To lose the coronet, revive the Pitt;
And in the Upper House, (where leading peers
Practise a minuet step, or scratch their ears),
He warmly undertakes to plead the cause
Of injured liberty and broken laws.

Forsaking patriots and politics, the poet passes on to literature and its surroundings. Ignoring "Kew Gardens," he now deals with "The Row," the sanctum of the book world, and refers to the difficulty of getting editors or publishers to read "the wild excursions of the Muse," exclaiming, as have so many friendless authors before and since the days of Chatterton, "Alas, I was not born beyond the Tweed!"

Touching on politicians, musicians, authors, and others, the poem drags its slow length along, some-

times having a smack at "pensioned Johnson," a rap at Bishop Newton, or the Catcotts, or Mayor Harris, or invoking Pitt, or sneering at Bute, treating grandees and nobodies with equal consideration. The Bristol clergy loom large in his sarcastic lines, Bishop Newton, Dean Barton, and many minor ecclesiastics having to undergo judgment in his irreverent verse. In youthful audacity he demands—

> Unless a wise ellipsis intervene,
> How shall I satirise the sleepy dean?
> Perhaps the Muse might fortunately strike
> A highly finished picture very like;
> But deans are all so lazy, dull, and fat,
> None could be certain worthy Barton sat.
> Come then, my Newton,[1] leave the musty lines,
> Where Revelation's farthing-candle shines;
> In search of hidden truths let others go—
> Be thou the fiddler to my puppet-show.
> What are these hidden truths but secret lies,
> Which from diseased imaginations rise?
> What if our politicians should succeed
> In fixing up the ministerial creed,
> Who could such golden arguments refuse,
> Which melt and proselyte the hardened Jews?
> When universal reformation bribes
> With words and wealthy metaphors the tribes,
> To empty pews the brawny chaplain swears,
> Whilst none but trembling superstition hears.
> When ministers, with sacerdotal hands,
> Baptize the flock in streams of golden sands,
> Through every town Conversion wings her way,
> And Conscience is a prostitute to pay.

From ministers of the Church to ministers of the State his saucy muse wings its flight. After sarcasti-

[1] Bishop of Bristol, author of a work "On the Prophecies."

cally asking pardon from Freedom for reference to the standard by which Lord Mansfield measures his conscience, when it is so well known "that Mansfield has no conscience, none at all!" Chatterton proceeds:—

> Pardon me, Freedom, this and something more,
> The knowing writer might have known before:
> But bred in Bristol's mercenary cell,
> Compelled in scenes of avarice to dwell,
> What generous passion can my dross refine?
> What besides interest can direct the line?
> And should a galling truth like this, be told
> By one, instructed how to slave for gold,
> My prudent neighbours (who can read) would see
> Another Savage[1] to be starved in me.

It is worth while reading the youthful poet's satires, if only to discover amid his rambling references what kind of books he had read, and what sort of people he was associating with, in these ebullitional days of his career; and it is interesting to notice that his allusions to men and manners are not all restricted to contemporary affairs. Some of his remarks on works of philosophy and divinity are reminiscent of his boyish studies, when he was an unsophisticated schoolboy at Colston's. His range of reading is seen to include even Bishop Berkeley's theory of the non-existence of matter, which is evidently glanced at in these lines:—

> All human things are centred in *belief*;
> And (or the philosophic sages dream)
> All our most true ideas only seem;

[1] Richard Savage died in Bristol.

as well as Bishop Newton's then recent book "On the Prophecies." These, and other now mostly forgotten theological works, are used "to point a moral and adorn" the verses of his erratic poem.

A portion of "Kew Gardens," which work, it must be remembered, was chiefly, if not entirely, written in Bristol, is interesting from its autobiographical confessions; as in these lines:—

Oh Prudence! if by friends or counsel swayed,
I had thy saving institutes obeyed,
And, lost to every love but love of self,
A wretch like Harris, living but in pelf;
Then happy in a coach or turtle-feast,
I might have been an alderman at least.
Safe are the arguments by which I'm taught
To curb the wild excursive flight of thought:
Let Harris wear his self-sufficient air,
Nor dare remark, "for Harris is a mayor";[1]
If Catcott's flimsy system can't be proved
Let it alone, for Catcott's much beloved,

. . . . .

If Camplin ungrammatically spoke,
'Tis dangerous on such men to break a joke;
If you from satire could withhold a line,
At every public hall perhaps you'd dine.

. . . . .

But ah! that satire is a dangerous thing,
And often wounds the writer with its sting;
Your infant Muse should sport with other toys:—
Men will not bear the ridicule of boys.

. . . . .

Some of the aldermen (for some, indeed,
For want of education cannot read).

. . . . .

[1] Isaac Harris, Mayor of Bristol.

Some of the aldermen may take offence
At your maintaining them devoid of sense;
And if you touch their aldermanic pride,
Bid dark reflection tell how Savage died!

. . . . .

Then leave the wicked, barren way of rhyme,
Fly far from poverty—be wise in time—
Regard the office more,—Parnassus less—
Put your religion in a decent dress;
Then may your interest in the town advance,
Above the reach of muses or romance.

. . . . .

Then clip Imagination's wing, be wise
And great in wealth, to real greatness rise.
Or if you must persist to sing and dream,
Let only panegyric be your theme.

. . . . .

Damned narrow notions! notions which disgrace
The boasted reason of the human race:
Bristol may keep her prudent maxims still,
But know, my saving friends, I never will.
The composition of my soul is made
Too great for servile, avaricious trade;
When raving in the lunacy of ink,
I catch the pen, and publish what I think.

# CHAPTER XI

## STERN REALITY

REVERTING to the more personal narrative of Chatterton's life, and putting on one side the fancies of his poems for the plain prose of fact, it will be seen that the poor boy's visions of the fame and fortune awaiting him in the metropolis were rapidly fading away. He did not, however, let the dear ones at home know anything of his troubles. The following letter, written to his sister on the 19th of June, is full of forced gaiety—of unnatural levity—without a spark of his usual affectionate remembrance, and is evidently sent to stop inquiries as to his prolonged silence:—

DEAR SISTER,—I have an horrid cold. The relation of the manner of my catching it may give you more pleasure than the circumstances itself. As I wrote very late Sunday night (or rather very early Monday morning) I thought to have gone to bed pretty soon last night: when, being half undressed, I heard a very doleful voice, singing Miss Hill's favourite bedlamite song. The hum-drum of the voice so struck me, that though I was obliged to listen a long while before I could hear the words, I found the similitude in the sound. After hearing her with pleasure drawl for above half an hour, she jumped into a brisker tune, and hobbled out the ever-famous song in which poor Jack Fowler was to have been satirized.—"I put my hand into a bush;

I prick'd my finger to the bone: I saw a ship sailing along: I thought the sweetest flowers to find;" and other pretty flowery expressions, were twanged with no inharmonious bray.—I now ran to the window, and threw up the sash, resolved to be satisfied, whether or not it was the identical Miss Hill, *in propria persona*, but, alas! it was a person whose twang is very well known, when she is awake, but who had drank so much royal bob (the gingerbread-baker for that, you know,) that she was now singing herself asleep. This somnifying liquor had made her voice so like the sweet echo of Miss Hill's, that if I had not considered that she could not see her way up to London, I should absolutely have imagined it her's.

(This part of the letter, for some lines, is illegible.)

. . . the morning) from Marybone gardens; I saw the fellow in the cage at the watch-house, in the parish of St. Giles; and the nymph is an inhabitant of one of Cupid's inns of Court. There was one similitude it would be injustice to let slip. A drunken fishman, who sells souse mackarel, and other delicious dainties, to the eternal detriment of all twopenny ordinaries; as his best commodity, his salmon goes off at three half pence the piece; this itinerant merchant, this moveable fish-stall, having likewise had his dose of bob-royal, stood still for awhile, and then joined chorus, in a tone which would have laid half a dozen lawyers, pleading for their fees, fast asleep; this naturally reminded me of Mr. Haythorne's song of—

"Says Plato, who—oy—oy—oy should men be vain?"

However, my entertainment, though sweet enough in itself, has a dish of sour sauce served up in it; for I have a most horrible wheezing in the throat; but I don't repent that I have this cold; for there are so many nostrums here, that 'tis worth a man's while to get a distemper, he can be cured so cheap.

June 29th, 1770.

My cold is over and gone. If the above did not recall to your mind some scenes of laughter, you have lost your ideas of risibility.

The conclusion or despatch of this communication seems to have hung fire, for some reason, for several days, as the postscript is dated ten days later than the letter itself. The contents of the epistle are scarcely in the style a boy would write to a sister, and seem really to have been written by one who did not wish to commit himself to anything about his own circumstances.

It has been seen that in a recent letter home Chatterton had asserted he had obtained an audience of Beckford, the Lord Mayor, had been well received and invited to repeat his visit, and that thereby hung a secret. How much of this was fact and how much fancy cannot now be ascertained, but certain it is that he did address a letter, signed "Probus," to the Lord Mayor and obtain its publication in the *Political Register* for June, 1770, and, doubtless, obtained such thanks from the city's chief magistrate as encouraged him to hope for some more substantial acknowledgment, despite his experience of "patriots" and poverty. He wrote a second letter applauding his lordship for his spirited address, or "Remonstrance," as it was styled, to the King, and the letter was in type, ready to be published and earn its writer such reward as Beckford might assign it, when, on the 21st of June, to the dismay of his partisans, his Lordship's sudden death was announced. For the time Chatter-

ton was thoroughly upset and, according to his relative, Mrs. Ballance, was perfectly frantic; quite out of his mind, and declared he was ruined.

Enough is known of Chatterton to understand that he would soon recover from this blow, but, according to the unsupported and, therefore, more than doubtful statement of Walpole, he had seen in the possession of an unnamed "private collector" "A Letter to the Lord Mayor Beckford," signed "Probus," dated May 26, 1770, on the back of which was endorsed, supposedly by Chatterton :—

Accepted by Bingley, set for and thrown out of the *North Briton*, June 21st, on account of the Lord Mayor's death.

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lost by his death on this essay | ... | ... | ... | £ | 1 | 11 | 6 |
| Gained in elegies | ... | ... | ... | ... | | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| „ „ essays | ... | ... | ... | ... | | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Am glad he is dead by | ... | ... | ... | | 3 | 13 | 6 |

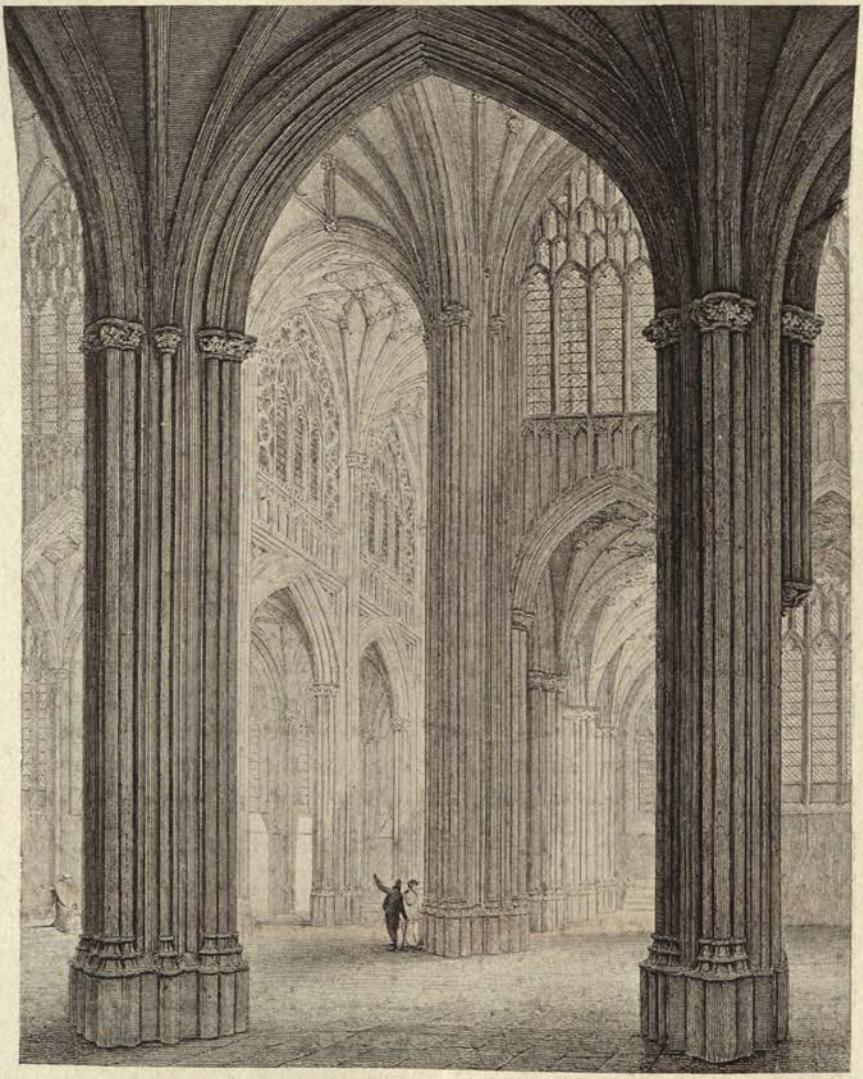
That Chatterton did write one elegy on Beckford is certain, because it was printed and published as a separate quarto pamphlet by Kearsley, Fleet Street, early in July, 1770, but that is the only one the publication of which can be traced. That he received anything like the sums named in Walpole's statement is most improbable; they are out of all proportion with any amounts paid him during his career. Walpole states the letter to which he refers is directed to "Carey." T. Cary was the schoolfellow and correspondent of Chatterton, and well known as the author

of some lines on the deceased poet, which may account for the use of his name by Walpole.

There are two other letters imputed to Chatterton's pen by Walpole, neither of which was written by him; one of them, an unpublished one, to Lord North, signed "The Moderator" and described as "an encomium on the administration for rejecting the Lord Mayor's remonstrance," is said to be dated May 26th, the very day on which Chatterton had written the letter for the printers, in which Beckford was thanked for the "Remonstrance." No one but Walpole appears to have seen this letter, and as its writing would have imperilled any chance of reward the young politician was striving for from the Lord Mayor, apart from any reasons of honour or honesty, it seems very unlikely that he would have written it. It was all very well for the boy to write about a person being a "poor author who cannot write on both sides," but that is a very different thing from doing so himself, especially when by so doing he would endanger all his prospects. It is well known that Walpole had seen Chatterton's published letters, and the onus of proving he had written this one rests with the accuser. Another letter Walpole said he had seen in manuscript, addressed to Lord Mansfield, is equally apocryphal; knowing what is known of the man's forgeries and falsehoods, its existence may be safely discredited.

About the end of June Chatterton did write a letter to Thomas Cary, beginning—

> Dear Arran! now prepare to smile,
> Be friendly, read, and laugh awhile;



SOUTH TRANSEPT, REDCLIFF CHURCH.

From J. Britton's "History of Redcliff Church."

To face p. 245.

which looks like a quotation from some one else, but may be his own composition. Proceeding with his epistle, he writes :—

But by the Lord, I have [illegible] poetry !—As I wanted matter for a sheet in the *Town and Country Magazine*, you will see this in print metamorphosed into high life. You accuse me of partiality in my panegyric on Mr. Allen: 'Pardon me, my dear friend, but I believe there are very few in Bristol who know what music is. Broderip has no taste, at least no real taste. Step into Redcliff Church, look at the noble arches, observe the symmetry, the regularity of the whole ; how amazing must that idea be which can comprehend at once all that magnificence of architecture ; do not examine one particular beauty or dwell upon it minutely; take the astonishing whole into your empty pericranium, and then think what the architect of that pile was in building Allen is in music. Step aside a little and turn your attention to the ornaments of a pillar of the chapel ; you see minute carvings of minute designs, whose chief beauties are deformity or intricacy. Examine all the laborious sculpture ; is there any part of it worth the trouble it must have cost the artist, yet how eagerly do children and fools gaze upon these littlenesses. If it is not too much trouble, take a walk to the College gate, view the labyrinths of knots which twist round that mutilated piece, trace the windings of one of the pillars, and tell me if you don't think a great genius lost in these minutiæ of ornaments. Broderip is a complete copy of these ornamental carvers ; his genius runs parallel with theirs and his music is always disgraced with littlenesses, flowers and flourishes. What a clash of harmony Allen dashes upon the soul. How prettily Broderip tickles their fancy by winding the same dull tune over again. How astonishingly great is Allen when playing an overture from Handel. How absurdly ridiculous is Broderip when blundering in, and new modelling the notes of that great genius ; how emptily amusing when torturing and twisting airs which he has stolen from Italian operas. I am afraid, my dear friend, you do not understand the merit of a full piece ; if you did you would confess to me that Allen is the only organist you have in Bristol—but of this enough. If you have not music enough to

enter into a dispute with me on the merits of Mr. Allen, engage one who has, to throw down the gauntlet, and I shall be ever ready to take it up.

A song of mine is a great favourite with the town on account of the fulness of the music. It has much of Mr. Allen's manner in the air. You will see that and twenty more in print after the season is over. I yesterday heard several airs of my burletta sung to the harpsichord, horns, flutes, bassoons, hautboys, violins, &c. and will venture to pronounce, from the excellence of the music, that it will take with the town. Observe I write in all the magazines. I am surprised you took no notice of the last *London;* in that, and the magazine coming out to-morrow, are the only two pieces I have the vanity to call poetry. Mind the *Political Register*, I am very intimately acquainted with the editor, who is also editor of another publication. You will find not a little of mine in the *London Museum* and *Town and Country*.

The printers of the daily publications are all frightened out of their patriotism, and will take nothing unless 'tis moderate or ministerial. I have not had five patriotic essays this fortnight, all must be ministerial or entertaining.

I remain, yours, &c.,

T. CHATTERTON.

From the challenge Chatterton throws out with respect to the merits of Allen in music, he would appear as if he wished to pose as a connoisseur in that art, but it is difficult to imagine when and where he would have had opportunities to study it technically. His expressions on the subject are scarcely those of a person practically acquainted with music and discussing it with any degree of proficiency. It is a pity he does not name that song of his which "is a great favourite with the town," as it cannot be identified now. The burletta is "The Revenge," of which something will be said

shortly; and "the only two pieces I have the vanity to call poetry" are "The African Eclogues," "Narva and Mored," and "The Death of Nicou," which appeared in the *London Magazine* for May and June respectively. In both of these two pieces are some fine and even grand lines. The opening of "Narva and Mored" is full of vigour and music, and the whole poem is in some respects not an unworthy companion to the Rowley pieces, as the following extracts show :—

Recite the loves of Narva and Mored,
The priest of Chalma's triple idol said.
High from the ground the youthful warriors sprung,
Loud on the concave shell the lances rung:
In all the mystic mazes of the dance,
The youths of Bonny's burning sands advance,
Whilst the soft virgin panting looks behind,
And rides upon the pinions of the wind;
Ascends the mountain's brow, and measures round
The steepy cliffs of Chalma's sacred ground.
Chalma, the god whose noisy thunders fly
Through the dark covering of the midnight sky,
Whose arm directs the close embattled host,
And sinks the labouring vessels on the coast;

. . . . .

The guardian god of Afric and the isles,
Where nature in her strongest vigour smiles;
Where the blue blossom of the forky thorn
Bends with the nectar of the opening morn.

. . . . .

The flying terrors of the war advance,
And round the sacred oak repeat the dance.
Furious they twist around the gloomy trees,
Like leaves in autumn twirling with the breeze,
So, when the splendour of the dying day
Darts the red lustre of the watery way,

Sudden beneath Toddida's whistling brink
The circling billows in wild eddies sink,
Whirl furious round and the loud bursting wave
Sinks down to Chalma's sacerdotal cave,
Explores the palaces on Zira's coast,
Where howls the war-song of the chieftain's ghost.

. . . . . .

Where the pale children of the feeble sun,
In search of gold, through every climate run:
From burning heat to freezing torments go,
And live in all vicissitudes of woe.

. . . . . .

Their lives were transient as the meadow-flower,
Ripened in ages, withered in an hour.

. . . . . .

Narva was beauteous as the opening day
When on the spangling waves the sunbeams play.

. . . . . .

Where the sweet Zinsa spreads its matted bed,
Lived the still sweeter flower, the young Mored.

. . . . . .

She saw and loved! and Narva too forgot
His sacred vestment and his mystic lot.
Long had the mutual sigh, the mutual tear,
Burst from the breast and scorned confinement there;

. . . . . .

Locked in each other's arms, from Hyga's cave
They plunged relentless to a watery grave;
And falling, murmured to the powers above,
"Gods! take our lives unless we live to love."

"The Death of Nicou," the second of these pieces, is more powerful and grander than its predecessor. The rhythm is richer and the versification more musical than the compositions of any of Chatterton's contemporaries, and since Milton's death no poet had made such majestic sound nor penned such mighty lines. Critics have carped at the ignorance

which placed the Tiber in Africa, but there is nothing to show that the transference of the river's *name* was not intentional on the poet's part. He can scarcely have been unaware of the Roman Tiber, and doubtless deemed himself at liberty to call an African stream, especially when an imaginary one, by any name he chose. The opening lines are very fine:—

> On Tiber's banks, Tiber, whose waters glide
> In slow meanders down to Gaigra's side;
> And circling all the horrid mountain round,
> Rushes impetuous to the deep profound;
> Rolls o'er the ragged rocks with hideous yell;
> Collects its waves beneath the earth's vast shell:
> There for a while in loud confusion hurled,
> It crumbles mountains down, and shakes the world,
> Till borne upon the pinions of the air,
> Through the rent earth the bursting waves appear;
> Fiercely propelled the whitened billows rise,
> Break from the cavern and ascend the skies:
> Then lost and conquered by superior force
> Through hot Arabia holds its rapid course.
> On Tiber's banks, where scarlet jasmines bloom,
> And purple aloes shed a rich perfume;
> Where, when the sun is melting in his heat,
> The reeking tigers find a cool retreat,
> Bask in the sedges, lose the sultry beam,
> And wanton with their shadows in the stream.
>
> . . . . .
>
> So when arrived at Gaigra's highest steep
> We view the wide expansion of the deep,
> See, in the gilding of her watery robe,
> The quick declension of the circling globe,
> From the blue sea a chain of mountains rise,
> Blended at once with water and with skies,
> Beyond our sight in vast extension curled,
> The check of waves, the guardians of the world.

There are other original thoughts and daring ideas such as—

> When the full sails could not provoke the flood,
> Till Nicou came and swelled the seas with blood;

but the reader will prefer to discover them for himself.

Stung beyond endurance by the flood of satirical slander and political libels, the ministry suddenly took stern measures to put a stop to incendiary publications, by prosecuting and imprisoning their editors and publishers, and Chatterton found his leading occupation gone. In the absence of a market for his political writings he had reverted to his first love, Poesy, and, as has been seen, the preceding eclogues were the firstfruits of his purified Muse. Then he tried his hand at all the kinds of composition in vogue, producing with fatal rapidity every variety of literary article he could find, or thought he could find, an opening for. It is a matter of much difficulty to discover amongst the many ephemeral publications of that time which are really Chatterton's contributions. Most of his articles at this period were written with such rapidity, merely to obtain the means of subsistence, that they bear no impress of their author's style and are devoid of his customary idiosyncrasies, so that identification, in the absence of his various pseudonyms, is impossible. Some of the pieces assigned to him, as produced during this struggle for existence, can be shown not to be his, and many which he did, doubtless, write at this period are still unrecognised, and are

waiting discovery and republication, if deemed worthy of it, in some future and more comprehensive collection of his works than any yet published.

Long before Chatterton left Bristol, as early as August, 1769, he appears to have written a dramatic piece he termed "Amphitryon." The title and a portion of the plot were derived from a drama by Plautus, probably through the medium of Dryden's version, as it is scarcely likely he had seen or, at all events, read the noted version of it by Molière. It was intended to be a musical comedy, with the dramatic personages divided into "Celestials," including Jupiter, Mercury, Juno, and Nox, and "Mortals," consisting of Amphitryon, Sosia, Phocyon, Doris, Alcmena, and Phygia. Much, if not the whole, of this production appears to have been written, and a quantity of the manuscript is preserved in the British Museum; some stray leaves of the work, in the autograph of Chatterton, occasionally turn up at auction marts, and other stray pieces have doubtless perished. "Amphitryon" has never been published, save such fragments of it as were revised and incorporated in "The Revenge," a later work; some lines in Dean Milles's edition of the Rowley poems, and some short extracts in an article by the present writer in *Harper's Magazine*. "Amphitryon" contains many vigorous passages not unworthy of preservation. The following scene in Olympus is typical of the general style:—

*Jupiter.* Ho! where's my valet, Hermes? Can't you hear, Sir?

*Mercury.* I came as quickly as I could, my dear Sir;

But Madam Juno's keeping such a clatter,
Old Neptune stayed me to inquire the matter.
*Jupiter.* In the folio ledger of Fate 'tis set down.
*Mercury.* It may be so, sir; but the writing's your own:
You took care that no woes should to you appertain,
Engrossed all the Pleasure—gave others the Pain.
*Jupiter.* How, sirrah, what mean you?
*Mercury.* Faith, 'tis a plain case
I'd have done the same thing had I been in your place.
*Jupiter.* Have I not got a wife!
*Mercury.* Ay, there's demonstration,
You've acted impartially in your vocation.

Many alterations and revisions were made in the manuscript, probably by Barrett, but the work was never published, for reasons which will be apparent to those who have perused what remains of the original draft. Doubtless, Chatterton took a copy of this drama with him to London, and when questioned as to his capability of writing words for a musical composition, as referred to in his letter to his mother of the 14th of May, naturally bethought himself of "Amphitryon." Taking that work as his model, and guided by his experience of London's musical requirements, he set to work, and with his usual rapidity completed a thorough revision of his old production, and rechristened it "The Revenge: a burletta." This poetic drama, as it now reads, is a spirited, harmonious production, not unworthy of the author of the Rowley poems.

"The Revenge" was approved by Dr. Samuel Arnold, the well-known musical composer, and was evidently considered suitable for production at the Marylebone Gardens, as Mr. Luffman Atterbury, of that place

of amusement, purchased the copyright of it for five guineas, as set forth in the agreement, in Chatterton's handwriting, now in the British Museum :—

Received July 6th, 1770, of Mr. Luffman Atterbury, Five Pounds, five shillings, being in full for all the manuscript contained in this Book of which I am the Author : for which consideration of Five Pounds five shillings I hereby give up my sole right and property in and liberty of printing and disposing of the same to the said Luffman Atterbury only and in such a manner as he thinks proper. As witness my Hand this 6th Day of July, 1770.

T. CHATTERTON.

Witness,
James Allen.

Dr. Maitland, the latest as well as a leading advocate for the antiquity of the Rowley Manuscripts, and, consequently, a depreciator of Chatterton's genius, had so high an opinion of the cleverness and skilful treatment of "The Revenge," that he refused to believe that it was written by the Bristol boy. Of course, he was unaware of the receipted agreement above referred to, or that the original manuscript, in its author's own calligraphy, was still in existence.

The history of the manuscript, like so many things connected with its unfortunate writer's story, is romantic in the extreme. Being unable to produce the burletta at the Marylebone Gardens, Mr. Atterbury sold the manuscript of it to a Mr. King, who, in conjunction with Mr. John Egerton, undertook the responsibility of having the work printed and published. After the contract had been executed and the work was ready for publication, it was found that the

manuscript had disappeared. After it had been lost for several years it was discovered quite unexpectedly. Mr. Upcott, of the London Institution, interested in seeing a well-written manuscript amongst the wastepaper in a cheesemonger's shop, secured it, and was enabled to identify it as Chatterton's work. Subsequently the manuscript was sold for one hundred and fifty pounds. Alas poor Chatterton! That sum, so far in excess of all that he received for the whole of his writings, would have been a fortune for him, and might have preserved him for greater things.

Misfortune even followed the book printed from the poet's manuscript. Owing to the editor's death the publication of the work was postponed and for ever. The book never was published, and although a few copies escaped destruction, it is now a bibliographical rarity. It is frequently stated that "The Revenge" was performed at Marylebone Gardens, but even this statement is incorrect. Dr. Arnold declared that, owing to some unknown cause, the burletta never was performed. It was neither published nor performed, all statements to the contrary notwithstanding.

The manuscript of the poem in the British Museum is doubly revised, both by the author and by some unknown person, but the revisions and cancellations are not numerous or important. Chatterton, to some extent, inherited his father's musical taste, and in "The Revenge," owing to his instinct for such matters, was enabled to adapt his verse in the happiest manner to the varied forms of recitative, solo, duet, and chorus. The burletta is in two acts,

divided into seven and five scenes respectively. It is mainly devoted to a matrimonial squabble between Juno, typical of a shrewish wife, and Jupiter, a faithless and somewhat henpecked husband; but the dramatic action is complicated by an under-plot and by the mischievous tricks of Cupid.

The first scene presents Jupiter complaining of his wife's bad temper. After a short description of her behaviour the deity changes the air, concluding with the threat:—

> I fly her embraces,
> To wenches more fair;
> And leave her wry faces,
> Cold sighs and despair.

He then declares in recitative:—

> And oh! ye tedious minutes, steal away;
> Come evening, close the folding doors of day;
> Night, spread thy sable petticoat around,
> And sow thy poppies on the slumbering ground;
> Then raving into love, and drunk with charms,
> I'll lose my Juno's tongue in Maia's arms.

Another air and recitative, and then Juno enters. A quarrel ensues between the two deities in verse more harmonious than the words it is told in. Jupiter demands:—

> What means this horrid rattle?
> And must that tongue of riot
> Wage one eternal battle
> With happiness and quiet?

Juno continues the air:—

What means your saucy question?
D'ye think I mind your bluster?
Your godship's always best in
Words, thunder, noise and fluster.

The quarrel grows fiercer in alternative airs and recitative between the husband and wife, until Juno, perceiving that she has enraged her divine consort too far, deems it better to moderate her tongue and temporise for the present.

Jupiter, only too thankful for the respite, responds:—

Did the foolish passion tease ye,
Would you have a husband please ye,
Suppliant, pliant, amorous, easy?
Never rate him like a fury:
By experience I'll assure ye,
Kindness, and not rage must cure ye.

In an *aside* Juno declares:—

He's in the right on't—hits it to a tittle—
But Juno must display her tongue a little.

The goddess becoming somewhat too responsive to her husband's friendly advances, he exclaims:—

Egad, why this is more than I desire,
'Tis from the frying-pan to meet the fire,

and breaks into the air:—

What is love? the wise despise it;
'Tis a bubble blown for boys:
Gods and heroes should not prize it,
Jove aspires for greater joys.

Juno, taking up the air, praises love, but Jupiter,

having given his opinion, runs off without waiting for another rejoinder.

In the fourth scene Cupid appears and informs the Queen of Heaven of her husband's assignation with Maia. Furious, Juno asks for particulars, and is told by the God of Love:—

> Gad—so I will, for faith, I cannot hold it.
> His mighty godship in a fiery flurry,
> Met me just now—confusion to his hurry!
> I stopt his way, forsooth, and with a thwack,
> He laid a thunderbolt across my back:
> Bless me! I feel it now—my short ribs ache yet—
> I vowed revenge and now, by Styx, I'll take it.
> Miss Maia in her chamber, after nine,
> Receives the Thunderer in his robes divine.
> I undermined it all; see, here's the letter—
> Could dukes spell worse, whose tutors spelt no better?
> You know false spelling now is much the fashion.

For his own revenge and Juno's, the mischief-making little god arranges to get Maia out of the way, Juno arranging to take her place and receive Jupiter in her stead. This plot being contrived the urchin sings:—

> How often in the marriage state
> The wise, the sensible, the great,
> Find misery and woe;
> Though should we dive in nature's laws
> To trace the first primæval cause
> The wretch is self-made so.

Bacchus, with a bowl, staggering and singing, now enters:—

> 'Odsniggers, 'tother draught, 'tis devilish heady,
> Olympus turns about; (*staggers*) steady, boys, steady!

*Sings.*

If Jove should pretend that he governs the skies,
I swear by this nectar his Thundership lies;
A slave to his bottle, he governs by wine,
And all must confess he's a servant of mine.

*Air changes.*

Rosy, sparkling, powerful wine,
All the joys of life are thine!
Search the drinking world around,
Bacchus everywhere sits crowned:
Whilst we lift the flowing bowl,
Unregarded thunders roll.

*Air changes.*

Since man, as says each bearded sage,
Is but a piece of clay,
Whose mystic moisture lost by age,
To dust it falls away;
'Tis orthodox beyond a doubt,
That drought will only fret it;
To make the brittle stuff hold out,
Is thus to drink and wet it.

Seeing Cupid, he invites him to drink, whereupon the little deity exclaims:—

Hence, monster, hence! I scorn thy flowing bowl,
It prostitutes the sense, degenerates the soul.

Bacchus rejoins:—

Gadso, methinks the youngster's woundy moral!
He plays with ethics like a bell and coral.

*Air.*

'Tis madness to think:
To judge ere you drink,
The bottle all wisdom contains:
Then let you and I
Now drink the bowl dry,
We both shall grow wise for our pains.

*Air.*

*Cupid.* The charms of wine cannot compare
With the soft raptures of the fair:
Can drunken pleasures ever find
A place with love and womankind?
Can the full bowl pretend to vie
With the soft language of the eye?
Can the mad roar our passions move
Like gentle breathing sighs of love?

After a rhyming duel between the two, Bacchus flings the contents of his bowl in Cupid's face and runs off. The insulted deity vows revenge and declares that—

No more in the bowl
His brutalised soul
Shall find a retreat from the lass.

The second act opens with Bacchus moralising. Cupid has evidently been at mischief, and the alcoholic god is seen suffering from the wound; he sings:—

Zounds, can't I guess the cause—hum! could I say a
Short prayer or two, with pretty Mistress Maia?
Ah! there it is! why, I was woundy stupid—
Faith, this is all the handy-work of Cupid.

*Air.*

Fill the bowl and fill it high,
Vast as the extended sky!
Since the dire disease is found,
Wine's a balm to cure the wound.
O the rapturous delights
When with women wine unites.

The next scene represents a dark room in which

Juno, in the place of Maia, is waiting for Jove, but instead of whom Bacchus enters, singing amongst other matters:—

> The man who has no friend at court,
> Must make the laws confine his sport;
> But he that has, by dint of flaws
> May make his sport confine the laws.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Zounds! I've a project, and a fine one too—
> What will not passion and invention do?
> I'll imitate the voice and sound of Jove,
> The girl's ambition won't withstand his love.

Bacchus accordingly imitates the Thunderer's voice so well that Juno is deceived and assumes the place of Maia.

> *Bacchus* (*aside*).
>
> Gods! I have struck upon the very minute:
> I shall be happy, or the devil's in it.
> It seems some assignation was intended,
> I'd pump it—but least said is soonest mended.

Believing it is her consort, Juno, in her character of Maia, questions Bacchus as to his constancy, and he, under the pretence of being Jove, answers:—

> By the dirty waves of Styx, I swear it,
> My love is yours—my wife shall never share it.
>
> *Juno* (*aside*).
>
> 'Tis a sad compliment, but I must bear it.

In the following scene Jove, arriving, exclaims:—

> I heard a voice within, or else I'm tipsy—
> Maia, where are you? Come, you little gipsy;

and in the confusion following his demand calls forth "the glories of the day" to illuminate the place. When the three deities behold one another under such embarrassing circumstances they start mutual recriminations, but, through the intervention and explanations of Cupid, a general reconciliation takes place. All successfully give vent to their feelings in song: first in solos and then in chorus. The air sung by Cupid will suffice as a sample:—

> For you, ye fair, whose heavenly charms
> Make all my arrows useless arms;
> For you shall Handel's lofty flight,
> Clash on the listening ear of night;
> And the soft, melting, sinking lay
> In gentle accents die away:
> And not a whisper shall appear
> Which modesty would blush to hear.

Extracts from a drama are notoriously inadequate to represent the work as a whole, and from such a piece as a rhymed musical play are utterly powerless to expound its characteristics. Such quotations as have been given from "The Revenge," good, bad or indifferent, are meant to give an idea of the plot, but will not fail to convey to the reader's mind astonishment at the versatility, dramatic skill, and knowledge of the world displayed by the youthful author. In some of the Rowley works, in "The Revenge," and still more in the fragmentary "Woman of Spirit," Chatterton displays an acquaintance with and a shrewd discernment of character which, combined with his quick appreciation of dramatic effect, would have made him the most prominent dramatist

of his age had he lived long enough to have continued his literary craft in that direction.

The five guineas he received for "The Revenge" was evidently the largest sum of money Chatterton had ever been paid for a single work. In the triumph of being possessed of so much cash, and forgetting or ignoring his own wants, he immediately laid it out—or a very considerable portion of it—in presents for his relatives in Bristol, sending the souvenirs home with the accompanying letter, dated July 8, 1770:—

DEAR MOTHER,—I send you in the box, six cups and saucers with two basons for my sister.—If a china teapot and creampot is, in your opinion, necessary, I will send them; but I am informed they are unfashionable, and that the red china, which you are provided with, is more in use. A cargo of patterns for yourself, with a snuffbox, right French, and very curious in my opinion.

Two Fans—the silver one is more grave than the other, which would suit my sister best.—But that I leave to you both.

Some Bristol herb snuff in the box; be careful how you open it. (This I omit lest it injure the other matters.)

Some Bristol herb tobacco for my grandmother: some trifles for Thorne. Be assured whenever I have the power, my wil won't be wanting to testify that I remember you.

Your's,

July 8th, 1770. T. CHATTERTON.

N.B.—I shall forestall your intended journey and pop down upon you at Christmas.

I could have wished you had sent my red pocket-book, as 'tis very material.

I bought two very curious twisted pipes for my grandmother; but both breaking, I was afraid to buy others, lest they should break in the box; and being loose, injure the china. Have you heard anything further of the Clearance?

Direct for me at Mrs. Angel's, sack-maker, Brook Street, Holborn.

This letter is the first intimation of Chatterton having removed from the Walmsleys. He gave the Walmsleys no explanation of the cause of his removal, and was, it is seen, equally reticent with his mother. It will be noticed that his mother had proposed a visit to London, and that suggested visit may have had something to do with his removal to other lodgings. Doubtless, various reasons existed to render him unwilling that his mother should come to him in London. One was that she would then discover the poverty of his surroundings and the falsity of his pretended grandeur. The shabbiness of his clothes, and his inability to take her to the various places of amusement he speaks of being a habitual frequenter of, would be additional reasons. She would hear from Mrs. Ballance that he rarely touched meat and only drank water, and seemed, as she remarked, "to live on the air." And they would let her know that when he sent the presents home he was almost in want, and Mrs. Walmsley might repeat to his mother what she had said to him when he objected to having his room swept, and told her that "poets hated brooms," about not knowing "anything poet-folks were good for, but to sit in a dirty cap and gown in a garret, and at last to be starved." Alas, but too well did Mrs. Walmsley foretell the poet's doom!

These and perhaps other things rendered it inadvisable for his mother to visit him in London, and made it necessary for him to at least delay, if not to permanently prevent, her visit by threatening to forestall it by his own journey to Bristol. On

the 11th of July, by which time he had, it is to be presumed, got settled in his new lodgings in Brook Street, Chatterton wrote the following letter to his sister, from which little is to be gathered save that the promised silk gown cannot be purchased yet. Doubtless the money received from the burletta was nearly expended and, although he was willing to make her wants his, the wherewithal was not available. Even the money to purchase copies of the publications in which his own writings were appearing could not be spared, it would seem. The letter is short:—

DEAR SISTER,—I have sent you some china and a fan. You have your choice of two. I am surprised that you chose purple and gold. I went into the shop to buy it: but it is the most disagreeable colour I ever saw—dead, lifeless, and inelegant. Purple and pink, or lemon and pink, are more genteel and lively. Your answer in this affair will oblige me. Be assured that I shall ever make your wants my wants; and stretch to the utmost to serve you. Remember me to Miss Sandford, Miss Rumsey, Miss Singer, &c., &c., &c.

As to the songs, I have waited this week for them, and have not had time to copy one perfectly: when the season's over, you will have 'em all in print. I had pieces last month in the following Magazines: *Gospel Magazine*, *Town and Country*, viz.: "Maria Friendless," "False Step," "Hunter of Oddities," "To Miss Bush," &c.; *Court and City*, *London*, *Political Register*, &c., &c. The *Christian Magazines*, as they are not to be had perfect, are not worth buying.

I remain,
Your's,
T. CHATTERTON.

## CHAPTER XII

### IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

WHEN Chatterton moved from Shoreditch to Holborn he found himself, for the first time since his childhood, the occupant of a room to himself where he could work or meditate alone and undisturbed. At Colston's Hospital he had to share his bed with a schoolfellow; at Lambert's he had to endure the nocturnal society of the footboy, and at Walmsley's he had to put up with the nightly companionship of the plasterer's nephew. Now he could labour day or night without interrupting or being interrupted by any one. Alas, the time was almost past for solitude being of any service to him. Had he *now* had a trusted companion, a real friend, in whom he could have confided, or from whom he might have sought consolation, what a different ending there might have been to his story!

The house to which he had moved was 39, Brook Street, on the west side of the road,[1] in the occupation of Mrs. Angel, a sack (dress) maker, from whom he rented a room.

Possibly it was due to his solitude, or perhaps,

[1] The house was identified by the late Moy Thomas.

according to the more commonplace theory, that he had now received his useful glossary from home, that he had produced another, his last, Rowley poem. An "Excelente Balade of Charitie," the swan death-song of Rowley, is a beautiful poem, evidently typical of its author's own melancholy story and replete with personal allusion. Purporting to be "written by the good priest, Thomas Rowley, 1464," the manuscript was sent by its real writer, early in July, 1770, to the *Town and Country Magazine* for publication, but either because the poetry was above the understanding of Hamilton, the editor, or because it was disguised in the pseudo-mediæval spelling of the Redcliff documents, the ballad was rejected. It is thoroughly typical of the believers in the Rowley myth, who deemed it necessary for the support of their theory that the acknowledged writings of Chatterton should be decried, to applaud highly everything appertaining to the supposed fifteenth-century priest, and in this "Balade" they had good ground to go upon. Accordingly, Dean Milles, in firm belief of its antiquity, honestly describes this illustration of the parable of the good Samaritan :—

> The satire is keen, the morality excellent, and the description worked up with wonderful art, propriety, and dignity of expression. The ripeness of the Autumnal season, the heat of the sun, the closeness of the atmosphere, the gradual approach of the thunderstorm, with its violent effects, the momentary intervening calm and return of the storm, cannot be described in words more expressive of their effects.

Truly an appropriate appreciation of the boy poet's artistic delineation of nature, as is confirmed by the

remarks of a far more competent critic, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, who with reference to this poem points out that Chatterton "was half starving when he wrote 'The Balade of Charitie,' which for reserved power and artistic completeness no youthful poet has ever approached."

Slightly revised from the original spelling and with a few words, where necessary, translated by the aid of Chatterton's glossary, the poem reads thus :—

I.

In Virgo, the sweltry sun 'gan sheene,[1]
And hot upon the meads did cast his ray;
The apple reddened from it's paly green,
And the soft pear did bend the leafy spray;
The pied chilandry[2] sang the livelong day;
'Twas, now the pride, the manhood of the year,
And eke the ground was 'dight in its most deft aumere.[3]

II.

The sun was gleaming in the middle day,
Dead still the air and eke the welkin blue,
When from the sea arose in drear array,
A heap of clouds of sable, sullen hue,
The which fall fast unto the woodland drear,
Shrouding at once the sun's all radiant face:
And the black tempest swelled and gathered up apace.

III.

Beneath an holm, fast by a pathway side,
Which did unto Saint Godwin's convent lead,
A hapless pilgrim moaning did abide,
Poor in his sight, ungentle in his weed,[4]
Long bretful[5] of the miseries of need,
Where from the hailstone could the beggar fly?
He had no shelter there, nor any convent nigh.

---

[1] Shine. [2] Goldfinch. [3] Apparel.
[4] Dress. [5] Filled with.

IV.

Look in his gloomy face, his spirit scan;
How woe-begone, how withered, bloodless, dead!
Haste to thy church glebe-house,[1] accursëd man!
Haste to thy kist,[2] thy only sleeping bed.
Cold as the clay which wilt grow on thy head,
Is Charity and Love among high elves,
For Knights and Barons live for pleasure and themselves.

V.

The gathered storm is ripe; the big drops fall;
The sunburnt meadows smoke and drink the rain;
The coming ghastness do the cattle 'pall,
And the full flocks are driving o'er the plain;
Dashed from the clouds the waters float again;
The welkin opes; the yellow lightning flies;
And the hot fiery steam in the wide flaming dies.

VI.

List! now the thunder's rattling, clanging sound
Moves slowly on, and then enstrengthened clangs,
Shakes the high spire, and lost, dispended, drowned,
Still on the frightened ear of terror hangs;
The winds are up; the lofty elm-tree swangs,
Again the levin, and the thunder pours,
And the full clouds are burst at once in stony showers.

VII.

Spurring his palfrey o'er the watery plain,
The Abbot of Saint Godwin's convent came;
His chapournette[3] was drenchëd with the rain,
His painted girdle met with mickle shame;
He backward told his beadroll at the same;[4]
The storm increaseth and he drew aside,
With the poor alms-craver, near the holm to bide.

---

[1] Grave. [2] Coffin.

[3] Hat worn by lawyers and ecclesiastics.

[4] He told his beads backwards, a figurative expression to signify cursing.

VIII.

His cloak was all of Lincoln cloth so fine,
With a gold button fastened near his chin;
His autremote[1] was edged with golden twine,
And his peaked shoes a lover's might have been;
Full well it showed he thoughten the cost no sin;
The trammels of the palfrey pleased his sight,
For the horse-milliner his head with roses dight.

IX.

"An alms, Sir Priest!" the drooping pilgrim said.
"O! let me wait within your convent door,
Till the sun shineth high above our head,
And the loud tempest of the air is o'er;
Helpless and old am I, alas! and poor;
No house, no friends, no money in my pouch,
All that I call my own is this my silver crouch."[2]

X.

"Varlet," replied the Abbot, "cease your din,
This is no season alms and prayers to give;
My porter never lets a vagrant in;
None touch my ring who not in honour live."
And now the sun with the black clouds did strive
And shooting on the ground his shining ray,
The Abbot spurred his steed and swiftly rode away.

XI.

Once more the sky was black, the thunder rolled;
Fast running o'er the plain a priest was seen;
Not dressed full proud, nor buttoned up in gold;
His cope and jape[3] were gray and yet were clean;
A Limitour[4] he was of order seen;
And from the pathway side then turned he,
Where the poor pilgrim lay beneath the holmen tree.

---

[1] Cowl.
[2] Crucifix.
[3] Surplice.
[4] Mendicant friar.

XII.

"An alms, Sir Priest," the drooping pilgrim said,
"For sweet St. Mary and your order's sake."
The Limitour then loosened his pouch thread,
And did thereout a groat of silver take;
The needy pilgrim did for halline[1] shake.
"Here, take this silver, it may ease thy care;
We are God's stewards all, nought of our own we bear.

XIII.

"But ah! unhappy pilgrim, learn of me,
Scarce any give a rent roll to their Lord;
Here, take my semecope,[2] thou art bare, I see;
'Tis thine; the Saints will give me my reward."
He left the pilgrim, and his way aborde.[3]
Virgin and holy Saints who sit in gloure,[4]
O give the mighty will, or give the good man power.

Alas, poor Chatterton! "No friend, nor money in his pouch," and knowing by sad experience that "barons live for pleasure and themselves," what could he do? Hope to the end, although that end be disappointment and despair? On July 20th he wrote again to his sister, who would appear to have decided upon the colour of her dress, but who must now wait until that sanguine brother of hers has finished an oratorio:—

I am now about an Oratorio, which, when finished, will purchase you a gown. You may be certain of seeing me before the 1st January, 1771. The Clearance is immaterial. My mother may expect more patterns. Almost all the next *Town and Country Magazine* is mine. I have an universal acquaintance: my company is courted everywhere; and, could

[1] Joy.
[2] Short under-cloak.
[3] Went on.
[4] Glory.

I humble myself to go into a compter, could have had twenty places before now :—but I must be among the great; state matters suit me better than commercial. The ladies are not out of my acquaintance. I have a deal of business now, and must, therefore, bid you adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon—and more to the purpose.

Yours,

T. C.

The longer letter, more to the purpose, never arrived. It is stated, upon testimony too doubtful to be trusted, that his mother did receive another letter from Chatterton, but, if it be true, its contents have never been divulged to the world. As far as is known, the adieu in the above letter was really his farewell to the dear ones at home. A fan, or a piece of china, could be sent as a remembrance, when a little cash was available, but the long-promised silk dress was ever beyond the poor boy's means.

During his last three months in London Chatterton's literary labours were enormous. Some of his manuscripts may have been brought up from Bristol by him in April; some were, it is known; but most of his metropolitan material must, from the very nature of its import, have been produced in the capital.

Of course, many of the articles ascribed to him in both prose and verse are not by Chatterton, as can be conclusively proved. Mr. Edward Bell, in his "Memoir of Chatterton," alluding to the immense quantity of work of all kinds contributed to the magazines by the poet, during the period referred to, remarks, "It is true that some of

these papers were not original," adding, "It was a too common practice in the last [the eighteenth] century for one writer to make unsparing use of the labours of another," as if the practice were not as common in the nineteenth century, and as it is in the twentieth, as it was in the eighteenth or any other century.

Mr. Bell, despite his charge against Chatterton of being "not more scrupulous than others," concludes that of the many papers ascribed to the lad, "nearly all were undoubtedly original," besides which it may be pointed out a considerable number, published or not, which have never been identified, must have been written by him. Apparently, Hamilton, of the *Town and Country Magazine* had a large number of Chatterton's contributions, which he held in reserve and did not publish until after the death of their author, some as late as November, 1775, and it is too likely that none of them were paid for. After the lad's death any available pieces could be used without fear of detection, even if they did not form part of the ten pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence shown by the entries in his pocket-book to have been unpaid, and owing to him by publishers.

Day after day he must have wandered with his manuscripts from publisher to publisher, and editor to editor, sometimes getting permission to leave them for perusal, but never able to get any money. Although he could write home and promise his relatives gifts, discuss by letter with his sister what colours in silk would best suit her in the gown which

was never to arrive, and even dispute with a Bristol correspondent about Church and State, and quote Rowley on architectural terms, for all that he must have felt that he was nearing the Valley of the Shadow.

Time was passing rapidly and, apparently, no money was to be had: his hopeful letters home had ceased to arrive. Doubtless, everything which could have been transmuted into cash had disappeared; whilst his strong, unconquerable pride forbade him applying to any friends in London or Bristol for help. So that, haggard, distressed, and looking quite old, it is possible that he may have appeared as careworn and elderly for his young years as represented in the picture of him in a garret, with its miserable surroundings, printed in blue ink on a piece of linen, and said to be reproduced from a sketch made of him by a friend in the last days of his life. The short story of his London career, already near its climax, cannot be summed up better than by the feeling words of William Howitt:—

> From the moment that he set foot in London, what is there in all biography so heart-breaking to contemplate? With a few borrowed guineas he sets out. Arrived in this great ocean of human life, where one living wave rushes past another as unrecognisant as the waves of the ordinary sea, his heart overflowing with domestic affections, he expends the few borrowed guineas in presents to his mother and sister, and sends them with flaming accounts of his prospect of honours for himself and of wealth for them. . . .
>
> But what was the stern reality? Amid all the flush of imaginary honours and success, or what he would have his family to think such, to tranquillise their minds, he was, in truth,

almost from the first, in a state of starvation. Of friends he does not appear to have had one in this huge human wilderness. Besides the booksellers for whom he did slave-work, not a single influential mortal seems to have put out a finger of fellowship towards him. So far as the men of literary fame were concerned, it was one wide, dead, and desert silence. Starvation pursued him and stared him every day more fearfully in the face. He was with all his glorious talents and his indomitable pride, utterly alone in the world . . . the noblest genius living was stalking on sternly through the streets of London to famine and despair.

Probably Chatterton's most constant correspondent at Bristol, excluding his relatives, was George Catcott. The correspondence was, evidently, voluminous, but Catcott, who treasured up so carefully every scrap of the Rowley MSS. he could obtain possession of, says that he destroyed all the letters he received from his young correspondent in London, excepting the last one, which was accidentally preserved. It was an answer to one from Catcott, dated Bristol, August 8, 1770, addressed to Chatterton in these terms :—

SIR,—I have yours of the 10th ult. now before me, which should have been answered sooner cou'd I possibly have found a Leisure Hour to do it in.

After discussing the question of a "Gothic Dome," much commended by Chatterton, Catcott continues :—

You will undoubtedly be not a little pleased when I inform you Mr. Barratt [*sic*] has been lucky enough to rescue from oblivion a large Box full of valuable Manuscripts relating to Bristol which have been in a gentleman's Family, a few Miles from this City, whose Father intended publishing them ever since the year 1708. Mr. Barratt wou'd be glad to hear from you and desires to be informed what way you are in. I am

told you're employ'd sometimes as a political, and at other times as a poetical writer, at a salary of 2 guineas a week.

Since you are got under the Tuition of an Angel shou'd be glad to be informed whether he belongs to the Prince of Darkness, or the Regions of Light. I sincerely hope the latter. . . .

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
GEORGE CATCOTT.

To this epistle Chatterton sent an answer dated August 12, 1770, and as it is probably the last letter the poet ever wrote, its contents have been scrutinised with the deepest interest and keenness.

It will be plainly seen that the letter is filled mainly with nonsensical aimless gossip, including a few lines of unpublished unreliant boyish braggadocio respecting certain amorous exploits of the writer, which those people familiar with his strong imagination will give no more credence to than they do to any other of his mythical confessions. The last paragraph of the letter really shows why the bestraught poet nerved himself, even at that eleventh hour, to write to Catcott. It was with the forlorn hope that a friendly word from him might help to induce Barrett to send him the medical certificate he requires. "I hope he will" is the vain, despairing cry of the broken-hearted lad:—

SIR,—A correspondent from Bristol had raised my admiration to the highest pitch by informing me that an appearance of spirit and generosity had crept into the niches of avarice and meanness:—that the murderer of Newton [1] (Ferguson) had met with every encouragement that ignorance could bestow; that an episcopal palace was to be erected for the enemy of the Whore

[1] Bishop Newton.

of Babylon, and the present turned into a stable for his ten-headed beast—that a spire was to be patched to St. Mary Redcliffe, and the streets kept cleaner, with many other impossibilities : but when Mr. Catcott (the *Champion* of Bristol) doubts it, it may be doubted. Your description of the intended steeple struck me. I have seen it, but not as the inventions of Mr. ——. All that he can boast is Gothicising it. Give yourself the trouble to send to Weobley's, Holborn, for a View of the Church of St. Mary de la Annunciation, at Madrid, and you will see a spire almost the parallel of what you describe:—The conduct of —— is no more than what I expected : I had received information that he was absolutely engaged in the defence of the Ministry, and had a pamphlet on the stocks, which was to have been paid with a translation.[1] In consequence of this information, I inserted the following paragraph in one of my exhibitions :—

"REVELATION UNRAVELLED, BY ——.

"The Ministry are indefatigable in establishing themselves : they spare no expense, so long as the expense does not lie upon *them.* This piece represents the tools of Administration offering the Doctor a pension, or translation, to new-model his Treatise on the Revelations, and to prove Wilkes to be an Atheist."

The editor of Baddeley's *Bath Journal* has done me the honour to murder most of my hieroglyphics, that they may be abbreviated for his paper. Whatever may be the political sentiments of your inferior clergy, their superiors are all flamingly Ministerial. Should your scheme for a single row of houses in Bridge Street take place, conscience must tell you, that Bristol will owe even that beauty to avarice ; since the absolute impossibility of finding tenants for a double row is the only occasion of your having but one. The Gothic dome I mentioned was not designed by Hogarth. I have no great opinion of him out of his ludicrous walk—there he was undoubtedly inimitable. It was designed by the great Cipriani. The following description may give you a faint idea of it. From an hexagonal spiral tower (such I believe Redcliffe is) rose

[1] That is to say, an ecclesiastical preferment.

a similar palisado of Gothic pillars, three in a cluster on every angle, but single and at equal distance in angular spaces. The pillars were trifoliated (as Rowlie terms it), and supported by a majestic oval dome, not absolutely circular, (that would not be Gothic) but terminating in a point, surmounted with a cross, and on the top of the cross a globe. The two last ornaments may perhaps throw you into a fit of religious reflection, and give rise to many pious reflections. Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity! I request them not, for I am no Christian.—Angels are, according to the orthodox doctrine, creatures of the epicene gender, like the Temple beaux. . . .

I intend going abroad as a *surgeon*. Mr. Barrett has it in his power to assist me greatly, by *his* giving me a physical character. I hope he will. I trouble you with a copy of an Essay I intend publishing.

I remain,

Your much obliged humble Servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

Direct to me at Mrs. Angel's, Sack-maker, Brook Street, Holborn.

The Essay Chatterton speaks of is, apparently, one entitled "The Gallery and School of Nature," the manuscript of which is in the Bristol Museum. As far as is known, it has never been published, and although not quite complete, apparently wanting another page or so, what there is of it does not seem undeserving of publication. It is in the form of a vision, and fills four closely written foolscap pages, beginning "A few Nights ago as I was sitting in my closet and had not immediately fixed on any book to read, it came into my mind that I was to prepare a discourse for your Entertainment this Night."

When Chatterton found things going from bad to worse he formed the desperate resolution, as a last chance, of trying to go to Africa on board a sailing

vessel as surgeon's mate. Little medical knowledge was asked for in those days for such miserable employment, and the only qualification demanded was the possession of a surgeon's certificate, and this was what he had written to Barrett to give him. His surgical and medical skill must have been slight, but such as it was he prided himself upon it, as pieces of his manuscript in the British Museum testify.

When writing home to his sister on May 30th it will be seen that he had intimated that a sea career was open to him, saying that he "might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrooke, an East India Director, as qualified for an office no ways despicable," adding, however, as if the idea were only a passing allusion, "but I shall not take a step to the sea whilst I can continue on land." That the idea was not a mere transient whim verses to Miss Bush, of Bristol, published in the *Town and Country Magazine* as early as June of that year, indicate, such as—

> Before I seek the dreary shore
> Where Gambia's rapid billows roar.

As he had obtained nearly all the medical knowledge he had from or through Barrett, he turned naturally to him for the necessary document, but the surgeon, under some pretence, appears to have refrained from furnishing him with the certificate. Nothing further could be done. In the account of Chatterton which Barrett gives in his "History of Bristol" he does not make any reference to the subject of the proposed African engagement; and, in fact, his

allusions to the personal story of his former *protégé*, helper, and pupil are of the most meagre description. Whatever his knowledge of the youth, he carefully refrains from using it, or from giving utterance to a single sympathetic sentence.

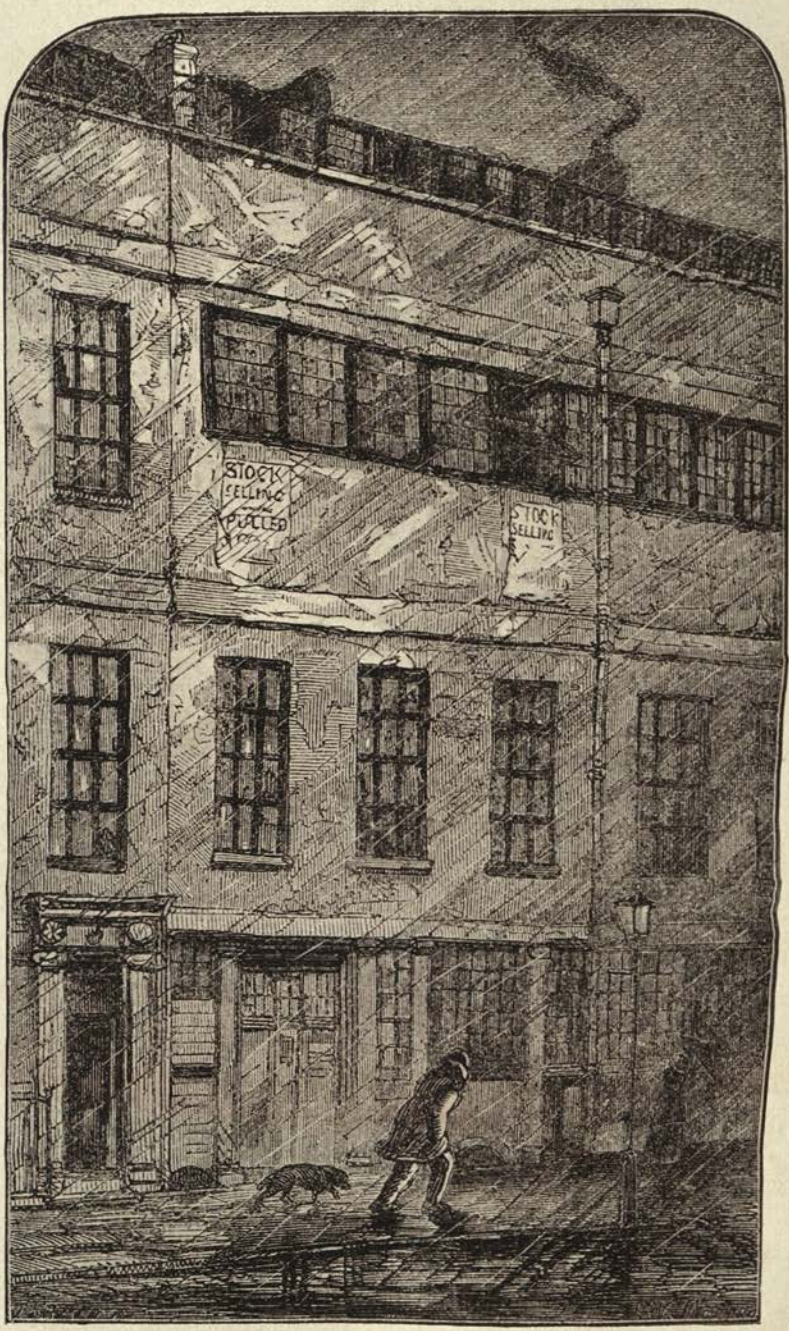
A few doors from the house where Chatterton lodged in Brook Street was the shop of Mr. Cross, an apothecary. The poet made the acquaintance of this man, after which, as Mr. Cross informed Thomas Warton, author of the "History of English Poetry," scarcely a morning or evening passed but the lad would step into the shop for a chat. His conversation, said the apothecary, "a little infidelity excepted, was most captivating." Mr. Cross stated further that, despite the most pressing and repeated importunities, he could never persuade Chatterton to accept an invitation to dine or sup with him. Nevertheless, one evening the young poet, probably driven by hunger, was prevailed upon to lay aside his pride and was tempted to partake of the contents of a barrel of oysters, which it was observed he ate of most voraciously.

The month of August was fatal to all Chatterton's hopes. The new number of *Town and Country*, which was to be nearly filled with his writings, was made up of the contributions of other people, and his articles were either rejected or their production postponed. Doubtless the editors of other publications treated him and his writings in a similar fashion. His money was evidently at an end, and absolute starvation stared him in the face. Sums due to him for accepted, if not for published, papers could not be

obtained. His appeal to Barrett, his former friend, associate, and confederate, was in vain. There was not a ray of hope anywhere. How did he exist? What were his latest doings? Who saw him, spoke to him, and knew how he comported himself?

The latest authentic information about the unfortunate lad is that gathered by Croft, who, in pursuing his inquiries some years after Chatterton's death, was informed by Mrs. Wolfe, who lived within a few doors of the house in which the poet had lodged, that she remembered him well. She spoke of his proud and haughty spirit, and said that he appeared to both her and Mrs. Angel, with whom she had been well acquainted, as if he had been born for something great. After the lad's death Mrs. Angel, who had moved away and could not be found by Croft when he inquired for her, told her neighbour, Mrs. Wolfe, that as she knew Chatterton had not eaten anything for two or three days, she begged him, on the 24th of August, to have some dinner with her. He was offended at her request, which seemed to hint to him that he was in want, and assured her he was not hungry.

When Chatterton had written to Barrett in the previous April he had averred it was pride which urged him to die rather than live as a servant, a slave, "to have no will of his own and not allowed to entertain any personal sentiments." "I will endeavour to learn humility, but it cannot be here," was then his assertion. "What it will cost me on the trial Heaven knows!" Pride still held sway over him. The trial was over and he had failed, and now the




THE HOUSE WHERE CHATTERTON DIED, BROOK STREET, HOLBORN.

From an old print.

To face p. 281.

penalty had to be paid. It is idle to moralise over his condition or to gauge the feelings of the unfortunate lad. Everything had gone wrong with him, and he could not face the world any longer. Heart-broken and starving, the poor boy deemed his only escape was by death, and he killed himself.

How the end was brought about is still one of the problems of Chatterton's story. Barrett, who could only repeat what he had been told, says he took "a large dose of opium, some of which was picked out between his teeth after death. He was found the next morning a most horrid spectacle, with limbs and features distorted, as after convulsions." Croft, who sought his information from the coroner, who had, however, taken no minutes of the affair and was unable to recall any of the circumstances to his memory, says that according to the depositions at the inquest Chatterton had swallowed arsenic in water on the 20th of August and died thereof the following day. Some of the boy's contemporaries assert that he died of starvation. Had poison finished what hunger had begun?

Some delay appears to have taken place in regard to the interment, which may have been deferred to allow the relatives an opportunity of claiming the body. No one applied, and the burial, according to the Register, took place on the 28th of August. The entry therein is, "William Chatterton, Brook Street," against which was subsequently added by "J. Mills" the words, "the Poet." It will be seen that the Christian name of the deceased was wrongly given, indicating that no one personally connected

with the lad had had anything to do with the burial.

Although Croft, the real authority for the suicide story, did not make his inquiries on the spot until several years after the poet's death, and when the man had developed a mania for ascribing the deaths of noted and notorious persons to self-murder, it is but too probable that the unfortunate lad perished by his own act. Croft very illogically reasons that Chatterton could not have been driven to death by absolute want, because he never indulged in meat and drank nothing but water; but if the lad had no money for bread and lodging his indigence was as positive as if he required rich meats and strong drinks. Although the coroner had no minutes or personal recollection of the inquest held in August, he had his official memorandum of the depositions, giving the names of the witnesses and so forth. According to the account furnished by Croft, from the information given by the memorandum, the witnesses who appeared before the coroner, and gave evidence, were Frederick Angell, Mary Foster, and William Hamsley, none of whom the narrator was able to find out. Hamsley is a most unusual name, and it is more than probable it is a mistake for Walmsley, the plasterer, or one of his family, called for purposes of identification.

When Chatterton's room was broken open owing to his non-appearance, it was found to be covered with little scraps of paper, just as his room at his Shoreditch lodging had been. What those disjointed scraps were was not discovered nor, in all probability,

did any one seek to learn. His glossary, which his sister must have sent him, as he ceased to ask for it in his later letters, and, perhaps, some unpublished Rowley pieces, had doubtless been destroyed in those last hours of anguish. Whilst living in Shoreditch he often said that he had valuable writings by him which would produce a great deal of money if they were printed, and when it was remarked that they did not take up much room, he persisted still in his assertion. "When he talked of writing something which should procure him money to purchase clothing, or to paper the room in which he lodged, or to send some more presents to his relatives in Bristol," and was asked why he did not do all this by means of the "valuable writings" he possessed, Croft was told he would answer they were not written for such a purpose, and "if the world did not behave well, it should never see a line of them." And these probably were the valuable writings, the fragments of which littered the room of death; trodden into dirt and destruction by those who came to carry out to the noteless grave all that remained of the once throbbing heart, proud spirit and aspiring brain. All now "cold as the clay which will grow on thy head."

According to the information given to Croft, Chatterton's body was placed in a shell, a pauper's coffin, and interred in the burying-ground of Shoe Lane Workhouse. There is no evidence to show whether the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of insanity with regard to the poet's death, or whether his distorted remains were treated as foreboded in his "Will" of the previous April. Was their fate that

assigned to suicides? There is nothing to show whether they did, or did not, "drag his body to the triple way," and wreak the law's last vengeance on his cold remains, as he had suggested they might do, and as was customary in the case of "self-murder"; but, if the information recorded by Croft be trustworthy, these indignities were not inflicted.

Occasional references have been made in the course of this narrative to "friends" and relatives of Chatterton, who knew him, or met him in London, but who they were or what became of them at the time of his death is unknown. There was Mrs. Ballance and an uncle, Phillips, said to be a carpenter, and in his first letter home Chatterton spoke of having seen aunts and cousins, but nothing more is heard of them. Some one acquainted with the family at Bristol must have appeared at or soon after the inquest and obtained possession of some of his effects, as the pocket-book containing his accounts and George Catcott's last letter to him found their way back to Bristol. And some one gave the information to Barrett as to the cause of his death and the appearance of his body when found. Although he destroyed some documents previous to his fatal act, it is very probable that manuscripts and correspondence were left in his trunk, and it is just possible that besides the various works which have been already referred to, as known to have existed, others which the lad had produced may turn up some day. There was the play of "The Apostate," another called "The Manksman," the unfinished drama of "The Dowager," the words of the oratorio he was writing for Dr. Samuel

Arnold, of which a portion at least seems to have been executed, besides other pieces he is known to have been engaged upon.

For years it was believed that Chatterton's body was buried in a pauper's grave—in "the Pit," as it was called, of Shoe Lane Workhouse; and many pilgrims there had the supposed spot pointed out to them, until ultimately, the ground being required for other purposes, the bones of the dead were disinterred and carried away. Upwards of half a century after the poet's death a strange story was promulgated to the effect that his corpse had not been buried in London, but that soon after the inquest it had been enclosed in a box, taken to Bristol, and been interred in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff. (See Appendix D, page 308.)

## THE SURVIVORS

THOSE who have followed Chatterton's sad story to the end cannot but feel desirous of learning what befell his dear ones at home, after his death. Their horror and anguish, when the news of his dreadful fate reached them, doubtless several days after his death, may be comprehended, but they suffered in silence. It is stated that Mrs. Chatterton, when she heard of her son's death, was seized with a nervous illness, which never left her during the remainder of her life. Of the old grandmother's fate nothing seems to have been made public.

When the story of Chatterton's decease had become common property, various persons published his works and appropriated the proceeds which accrued from them, without any regard to the rights of his legal, natural heirs. Some persons of literary and social position visited the place of his birth, and even interviewed his mother and sister, and from interest and curiosity questioned them about the dead boy. Writers having books or essays to publish for or against the Rowley myth, or the creator of it, cross-examined the two poor women so severely about the "forged" documents or the "purloined" parchments, that they were quite be-

SIR HERBERT CROFT, BART.

From an engraving after portrait by Drummond.

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side themselves with the worry of it, and Croft, who really treated them more cruelly than did any one else, states "a gentleman who saw these two women last year declares that he will not be sure they might not easily have been made to believe that injured Justice demanded their lives at Tyburn, for being the mother and sister of him who was suspected to have *forged* the Poems of Rowley. Such terror had the humanity of certain curious inquirers impressed upon their minds, by worrying them to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the *forgery*."

The actions of none of these self-seeking visitors could have caused the poor women such anguish as did that of the Rev. Sir Herbert Croft himself. According to Southey's narrative, Croft called upon them as a stranger, going to the house of Mrs. Newton, then a widow, her husband, Thomas Newton, to whom she was married on November 13, 1777, having died soon after their marriage, leaving her with one child, a little girl. Croft persuaded her to lend him the letters she had received from her brother whilst in London, pretending that it would be too painful for him to read them in her presence. She trusted the precious relics to him; he presenting her with a guinea, and promising to return the letters within an hour.

He then called on Mrs. Chatterton and in a similar way succeeded in obtaining her son's letters from her, leaving her half a guinea, as a present. The letters were not returned as promised. The poor woman's distress may be imagined. Croft was appealed to,

and, after some time, wrote, "all the little treasures shall be returned," and, eventually, it is thought, he did return the letters, all save the last, written home by the poet. This he kept, saying Mrs.. Chatterton had "suffered it to be retained as a curiosity." He desired Mrs. Newton to write him a letter, giving him every circumstance, however trifling, about her brother she could remember. The poor simple-hearted woman, grateful for his remarks about her deceased brother, complied with his request, and on the 22nd of September, 1778, sent him a lengthy account of the particulars of her "dear deceased brother's" life, as far as her memory would permit. She was reluctant to engage in the saddening task, which naturally was painful to her, but eventually unbosomed herself unsuspectingly of all the reminiscences she could compile of their lost darling.

Imagine the horror of the two friendless women when, the following year, they learnt that the soft-spoken clerical gentleman, who had sympathised so strongly with them in their desolation, had printed and published all the poor boy's private communications home to his dear ones, as well as the sister's ingenuous confessions, in a book containing matter of a disgusting and degrading character. Mrs. Chatterton wrote and upbraided him for his duplicity, and in reply he wrote and forwarded her and her daughter ten pounds between them, as a *solatium* for their wounded feelings. Mrs. Newton wrote to him again and again, but, according to Southey, was unable to get any further satisfaction, and, indeed, Croft appeared to imagine that he had acted hand-

somely towards the insulted and injured victims of his cruelty.

Other persons treated the unfortunate women little better. George Catcott, after obtaining every scrap of the Rowley productions he could possibly get hold of, and selling them for a large sum of money, was induced to give their author's mother five guineas, whilst the only return the family ever received from Barrett, whose heavily subscribed for "History of Bristol" was so largely composed of Chatterton's contributions, was, according to Southey, "surgical assistance gratuitously afforded to the sister, Mrs. Newton, *once* in a complaint of the breast, and once in curing a whitlow on her finger."

Then the church authorities of St. Mary Redcliff swooped down upon Mrs. Chatterton, as has already been explained, demanding all the manuscripts they had ignored for upwards of forty years, and terrified the poor woman into parting with all the copybooks and papers belonging to her dead son, over which she is said to have frequently wept tears of bitterness. For years her life must have been one prolonged tragedy, and in her case the mother had to suffer for the fault of the child. In the spring of 1771, as Dr. Stokes has discovered, one little ray of sunshine brightened her sad lot. Mr. Love, who was then master of the Pile Street School, not being a married man, was permitted by the school authorities "to reside in any part of St. Mary Redcliff parish as he shall think fit," and the schoolhouse "was lett by the Treasurer for the use of the charity." Mrs. Chatterton, thereupon, was permitted to return to her old home, to

the house where the few years of her brief married life had been spent and where her dead son had been born. For seven years the struggling widow managed to earn a scanty livelihood in the old home, when further misfortune befell her. In March, 1778, records Dr. Stokes, Mr. Love died and was succeeded in the schoolmastership by Nathaniel Cope, who, being married, required the schoolhouse. Poor Mrs. Chatterton was not only ejected from her home, but deprived of the various little occupations which she carried on there, such as "the making of the bands" or neckties for the scholars, which perquisite was now Mrs. Cope's, the new master's wife.

After this fresh blow the poor widow fell into dire distress, and appeals were made through the Press on her behalf, but the amounts collected for her never seemed important. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for January, 1792, drew attention to her very distressed circumstances, but by the time the notice appeared Mrs. Chatterton was dead. She died on the 1st of January, 1792, from the effects of a cancer, from which she had been suffering for some years.

Mrs. Newton, who appears to have lived with her mother for some time previous to her death, supported herself by teaching children to read. The income was precarious and her sight was beginning to fail, when Southey and Joseph Cottle bestirred themselves on her behalf. They projected an edition of Chatterton's Works for her benefit—works which, as Southey said, "had hitherto been published only for the emolument of strangers, who procured them by gift or purchase from the author himself, or *pilfered*

*them from his family.*" Something under two hundred pounds was obtained for Mrs. Newton, which soothed the last days of her life, when, as she said, without such aid she should have wanted for bread. She died in March, 1804, leaving one daughter, Mary Ann Newton. This Miss Newton eventually received a further sum of about six hundred pounds as the proceeds of the sale of the poet's works, but she did not live long to enjoy it, dying in 1807, at the age of twenty-four. She left one hundred pounds to a young man she was to have married, and the remainder of the money went to her father's relatives the Newtons.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### "MRS. EDKINS'S ACCOUNT"

IN 1837, John Dix, otherwise Ross, published a "Life of Chatterton." The most interesting matter in the volume was the new and romantic information about the poet's childhood. The chief portion of this information was not included in the biography, but was furnished in an Appendix, as "Communicated by G. Cumberland, Esq." It was ascribed to a Mrs. Edkins, wife of a painter and glazier, but there is no proof of it having been supplied by her.

Although all the more recent biographies of Chatterton are largely based upon this "Account," a considerable portion of it is evidently fictitious, as are other parts of Cumberland's "Communication," and the whole of it is doubtful. John Dix, the compiler of the volume, was a notorious publisher of literary myths, one of them being a false account of the inquest on Chatterton.

A most striking circumstance is that Chatterton, who, when writing home, sent messages and remembrances to everybody he had any knowledge of in Bristol, never makes the slightest allusion to Mrs. Edkins (then Miss James), yet according to the "Account" she had been a "second mother" to him, and had been his most confidential and affectionate companion from his birth, at which, it is stated, she was present. This remarkable omission is alone sufficient to invalidate the whole of the narrative purporting to be by Mrs. Edkins. Neither Chatterton's mother nor his sister ever mentions her name in their statements, and her alleged assertions as to the boy having fabricated

manuscripts whilst a schoolboy at Colston's Hospital is contrary to their testimony and the evidence of several other trustworthy persons. That Mrs. Edkins should have spoken to the schoolboy about "his old Rowleys," at the very time she is said to have been in fear as to what was the *unknown* work he was engaged upon, is contradictory.

The whole account as to Lambert's behaviour is contrary to fact, and has led biographers into all kinds of misstatements. Chatterton never complained of Lambert, only of his own position, and as he said to his mother when writing home from London, "as an apprentice none had greater liberties" than he had, "yet the thoughts of servitude killed me." It was his longing for liberty, and to be his own master, which made him dissatisfied at the scrivener's. Many of the remarks ascribed to Mrs. Edkins, although alleged to be "given as near as possible in her own words," are not such as would be expected from a woman in her lowly position.

Lambert was a rich man, only twenty-eight years of age, who had no knowledge of Chatterton's genius or aspirations. He regarded him as a sullen lad, who made himself disagreeable to his fellow servants, nevertheless, in after times, when asked about his character, declared the lad was always home punctually, which is in direct opposition to the "Mrs. Edkins's Account," and that his behaviour was always good, except towards the servants. It must be regarded as evidence in favour of Lambert's treatment of his apprentice that there is nothing against him in Chatterton's satirical writings, wherein only one other (Barrett) of his Bristolian associates is spared. So far from destroying every scrap of his apprentice's manuscripts, the scrivener, when he recognised the interest they inspired, carefully preserved such fragments as Chatterton left behind him, as these pages show. Lambert was much liked by his friends ; there does not appear any sign of maliciousness in his disposition, and he was deeply hurt by the way in which his non-recognition of the boy's abilities was animadverted upon by the public.

The presumed evidence of Mrs. Edkins against the character of Chatterton's father is as untrustworthy as her anecdotes about the son. It is unsupported by any known testimony. If she could have been a pupil of Chatterton senior, as averred in

Dix's book, she would have been far too young to have acted and spoken to her schoolmaster in the manner stated, but it does not seem possible that she could have been his pupil at all, seeing that the Free School in Pile Street *was for boys only.* This fact was, doubtless, unknown to Dix, although Mrs. Edkins must have known it, and could scarcely have made the assertion ascribed to her.

Many other of the statements alleged to have been made by Mrs. Edkins are equally untrustworthy, such as the remark that she "well remembers the coffer, or coffers, being removed by men with poles," from the old Canynges mansion, to St. Mary Redcliff Church, when it is known to all that the coffers had been in the church muniment room for centuries before Mrs. Edkins was born.

All records would appear to imply that Mrs. Chatterton had a fond regard for the memory of her husband, which would scarcely have been the case if he had been the brutal, heartless sot represented in the "Account" by Mrs. Edkins. The precocious pupil must have been quite a child when, according to the "Account," she reproached the schoolmaster for neglecting his prudent wife, and asked him what he married her for, and was answered, "solely for a housekeeper." This conversation, with others equally circumstantial, was supposed to be related after a lapse of more than half a century.

No biographer, careful as to the truth of his work, should place any reliance upon "Mrs. Edkins's Account" as given in the work of John Dix.

# APPENDIX B

## "THE EXHIBITION"

"THE Exhibition : A Personal Satyr" has never been published, the reason assigned for its suppression being the nature of its theme. The poem is based upon the story of the improper behaviour of a person at Bristol, but, like most of Chatterton's sarcastic pieces, it frequently digresses from its presumed subject, and touches upon a variety of alien matters. Although "The Exhibition" has never been given to the public, it contains much verse quite as deserving preservation as that included in its author's published lines, and portions of it have indeed done service in some of his best-known poems. Fifty consecutive lines appeared in his "Kew Gardens," comprising the greatly admired couplet :—

> "He keeps the passions with the sound in play,
> And the soul trembles with the trembling key."

The suppression of the poem was not entirely due to the nature of its theme, but in a great extent to the personality of its references to many well-known Bristolians. There is no reason to suppose that Chatterton ever intended the lines for publication, and, indeed, the very nature of their subject forbade such an idea *in extenso*, but when after their author's death every scrap of his writing was seized upon for publicity, George Catcott became alarmed at the probability of "The Exhibition" being included with the rest of the poet's writings, and protested most energetically and effectively against the publication of work which reflected so seriously and libellously upon many of his relatives and friends. Owing to the suppression of the poem and its supposed unsuitability for publication, editors

of Chatterton's works have been deterred from including it in their collection of his writings.

Notwithstanding the circumstances connected with the suppression of the poem, and allowing for the inequality of merit of the various portions, there does not seem to be any real reason, nowadays, why "The Exhibition" should not be published, provided the few offensive allusions be omitted, although Professor Wilson may be justified in remarking of what he probably never read, "It would have been well had it perished, with its evidence that youthful purity had been sullied, and the precocious boy was only too conversant with forbidden things."

The subject of the poem, the supposed arraignment of a well-connected Bristolian before his professional brethren for ill-behaviour, afforded Chatterton full scope for his sarcastic powers, especially as he was well acquainted, personally or by repute, with all the people referred to in his lines. The fair copy of the poem, which purports to be the first book only, consists of four hundred and forty lines. It was stated to have been begun on May 1st, and finished on the 3rd of that month, in 1770, consequently, it must have been written after its author's arrival in London. By the kind permission of the Bristol Art Gallery Committee, in whose possession the manuscript now is, we are permitted to publish the poem.

"The Exhibition," save only the lines above referred to, is now published for the first time, and although neither the subject nor its treatment will place it amongst its author's best productions, it is certainly deserving of preservation as further proof of Chatterton's skill in seizing upon and portraying the salient characteristics of the persons he came in contact with, although it is to be hoped that he judged his contemporaries the rather by evil report and malicious misstatement than by facts.

I give the names—as far as able—in brackets.

THE EXHIBITION. BOOK FIRST.

*May* 1, 1770.

Of Exhibitions infamous I sing,
Not such as boast the presence of a King
Where miserable daubings envious vie
For the poor wonder of an Ideot's (*sic*) ey(

Where tawdry glare and despicable shew
Burlesque and Elegance to please a Beau.
Not such as dignifies this rising land
Where Genius animates the Painter's hand:
Where all the excellence of real Taste
With every judgment but a King's is grac'd.
The Exhibition which the Muse prepares
To please the Modest Virgin's eyes and ears,
Soars above all the mimickry of Art. . . .
This truth, this mighty truth, if Truth can shine
In the smooth polish of a laboured Line,
[Catcott] by sad Experience testifies;
And who shall tell a sabled Priest he lies.
Bred to the juggling of the specious band
Predestinated to adorn the Land,
The selfish [Catcott] ripened to a Priest,
And wore the sable livery of the Beast.
By birth to prejudice and whim allied,
And heavy with hereditary pride,
He modelled pleasure by a fossil rule
And spent his youth to prove himself a Fool;
Buried existence in a lengthen'd cave,
And lost in dreams whatever Nature gave.
. . . . .
How can these attributes be sound within
When Satan tempts the inward man to sin!
Fly hence Temptation, [Catcott's] heavenly Heart
Is never mov'd but in the better part.
Devotion only warms his freezing blood.
. . . . .
But since of Clerical degree some few
Have served the Flesh and serv'd the Spirit too;
Since versed in all varieties of Vice
Hell gave us [Broughton] and Heaven gave us Price,
That one's devotion, so had God decreed,
Should counteract the other's evil deed;
And when the reverend Rector undertook
To curse a Harlot by the Bell and Book,
The other might the Plumes of Mercy spread. . . .
And take the wandering sinner to his bed.

Hail, pious [Broughton] could the author hope
For the high slight (*sic*) of Metaphor or Trope,
To reach the summit of thy hellish crimes
And stamp thee infamous to after times
The rapid Muse should urge the hasty Flight
And vengeance in the garb of Genius write;
But rest contented in thy little state
Great Villains are above the reach of Fate.
Offer'd to party little Rascalls fall
While greater Rascalls bear off the prize of all.
When Justice lingers to curtail thy days
Live Murderer, live, in your Protector's praise.
Since the nice conscience of Iscariot's Son
Did what the soul of [Broughton] would have done.
Since the great curse Episcopacy spread
Its baleful poisons from the Fountain head
Has Christianity a glorious name?
A Priest so skilful in the Arts of Shame,
Whose little soul with ev'ry meanness stain'd
Is in a constant course of vice maintained;
Since sicken'd Fancy's wild intrusions brought
Contagious whims a Pestilence of thought.
First in the Cells of monkish dullness bred,
And sent into the World without a head,
Has Corcat Wilkins, or the dreaming tribe,
Who Revelation's Fairy Tales transcribe,
Equall'd great [Broughton] in his Fustian line
For nonsense and absurdities divine?
For false conclusions, mysteries of sense,
To which an Oracle might make pretence
Immortal as the Soul his Fame shall live
And an eternal fund for laughter give;
A standing jest for Warburton or Louth. . . .

Enough of [Broughton], [Price] now sweeps along
Rich with the flatt'ry of Celestial Song
And whilst he searches for another prize
Only to feed his Sacerdotal Eyes. . . .

'Tis known I reverence the sacred black
Though on an Ideot's or a Villain's back.

Newton's a Bishop: at the awful Name
I give him all his literary Fame;
Own his prophetic influence and rejoice
That Wisdom can exalt his mighty voice,
And whilst the Sacerdotal Lawn I eye
Thro' that mysterious Fashion of the sky
I cannot see the reverend Prelate dull
A blinded, prejudiced and cheated Gull.
Cloth'd in each attribute of Hell is seen
The awkward Figure of a Bristol Dean.
[Barton], the holy [Barton] who presides
Over the conscience of the thing that guides
Spite of the many vices which I trace
In the black index of his ample face;
Spite of his sleeping, indolence and ease,
I view him in his clerical degrees,
See his devotion in his drunken look,
His piety in his unopened Book,
His Christian patience in the Oaths he swears,
And all his many virtues in his Heirs.
[Camplin] how shall I justly state the case
Between thy pride of heart and pride of face?
Thy haughty accent must bespeak at least
A soul above the common run of Priest.
And then, oh gracious Heaven: thy haughty stride
Would grace a Bishop with a proper pride;
Thou too art sabled but thy conscious line
Will honour merit tho' it should be thine
Whilst none thy powerful argument will scan
But loose (*sic*) the preacher to observe the Man.
This truth the Muses shall proclaim aloud
That [Camplin?] is as sensible as proud.
What means this throng, this multitude of Fools
Who square their actions by another's rules?
'Tis [Stonehouse] preaches, Gods! let fame resound
The tidings to the brandy Cellars round,
The specious Oracle, the Man of Noise,
The admiration of all Fools and Boys;
Who finds out meanings (if his talk can mean)
For texts which Wesley dropt and left to glean;

Drybeats a Sentence, racks each Eastern Trope,
Nor hesitates betwixt a sandy rope:
Robbs Jacob Behmen of his Magic Wit
And unwrites all that Jacob Behmen writ.
—— the Jesuitical, the small,
The hot enthusiast, the crown of all,
So inconsistent with himself and vain
I strive to wound him with Satyric strain.
Should I attempt his Battle (?) to revoke,
He's gone and long backed William has the stroke.
Should I attempt his Mistress to entice
He's gone again; the satire falls on Price.
If blamed for cards and swearing and all that
Still he eludes and shifts it to De Bat;
Then, if accused of varying in his part
Presto! he's fled; and lo I've wounded Hart.
This Harlequin of sacred things will still
Elude the Vengeance of the lifted Quill;
And hid behind his Brethren of the Gown
Escape the dubious blow and cheat the town.
[Robins] if Curates starv'd and pray'd away,
In the long labour of a Sabbath day,
May bear the honour to be rank'd with Those
Who rule the roast and lead them by the Nose.
[Robins] that Pulpit Fribble may be told
The blessings of a [Barton] must be sold.
The Whining Cant, the shrill religious Squeak
In which the reverend Molly learns to speak,
Went 'gainst the flint heart which [Barton] wears,
That heart more harden'd by the Widow's Tears.

Enough of Rectors, Curates, . . .
Thin peopled Pews and thronging Peoples Doors.
Now to the Exhibition we proceed,
And let the reader who can read it read.
O thou immortal power whose fire is such
Thy attributes are never known too much;
Before whose Altar in the Mystic Rite
The Priest and Priestess sacredly unite. . .

. . . . .

With honest indignation nobly fill
My energetic, my revengeful Quill:
Let me in strains which Heav'n itself indites
Display the Rascals who abuse thy Rites.
Let me with fury throw the numbers round
And spend my Vengeance smoaking on the ground.

Flying on silken wings of dusky gray,
The cooling evening closed a sultry day.
The cit walked out to Avon's dusty vale,
To take a smack of Politics and Ale.
Whilst rocked in clumsy Coach about the Town
The prudent Mayor jogged his dinner down.
. . . . .
The members of the Faculty began
To sit upon the madness of the Man.
And Marshall'd round a despicable thing
Beneath the notice of the Bard to sing.
Smith was deputed, in his accents great,
Her Ladyship's Ambassador of State,
To bring this culprit to the bar and tell
The busy town without their help he fell. . . .

Still silence reigns, when prating [Smith] begins
To lay down all his Catalogue of sins.
Ye children of Corruption, who are fed
On the good fortune of a broken head. . . .
Who live luxuriant on a rotten shin,
And like the Devil's kingdom, thrive by Sin;
To you, ye sons of torment, I commend
Patience and Vigilance until I end.
The Pris'ner at the Bar, whose downcast face
Betrays some little mark of inward Grace,
Has brought dishonour on our honoured name
And sold himself to infamy and shame. . . .
. . . . .
There Peter sits a Veteran in his Trade:
O the fixed resolution of his Blade!
To every rule of Surgery unknown,
But what the blockhead boasts of as his own.

He amputates and mangles without skill;
'Tis but (a) common trifle should he kill;
Blund'ring when life is trembling on a thread
And adding mis'ry to the dying's Bed.
Perhaps he errs, but who can blame the man?
If he can't mend his Errors [Barrett] can,
And this to play into a brother's hand
Is Charity, and makes the calling stand.
Death is a very trifle in our Trade
A Pill mistaken or too keen a Blade.

He ended and as usual in his way
Could in long orations nothing say.
Empty and without meaning he display'd
His Sire's loquacity in his array'd.
Barratt (*sic*) arose and with a thundering air
Stretched out his arm and dignified the chair.
This madness unaccountable has long
Best [Been?] known in Bristol's best Records a Song
Who in Antiquity so little read
Of all the learned Body round me spread. . . .
. . . . . .
'Tis beyond dispute,
Mercy is heaven's supremest attribute.—
If [Barton] lives in Elegance and Ease
Renown'd for robbing Curates of their fees.
. . . . . .
O Inspiration rising in my skull—
A certain token that the Moon's at full,—
Look to all learning, elegance and sense,
Long had this famous City told her pence.
Avarice sat brooding in her white-washed Cell[1]
And Pleasure had a Hut at Jacob's Well,
A mean Assembly-room, absurdly built,
Boasted one gorgeous lamp of copper gilt;
With farthing candles, chandeliers of tin,
And services of water, rum, and gin.
There, in the dull solemnity of wigs,
The dancing bears of commerce murder jigs

[1] Where the old Bristol theatre stood.

Here dance the dowdy belles of crooked trunk;
And often, very often, reel home drunk;
. . . . .
Enraptured with the genius of a Donn
Who murders everything he writes upon,
All Bristol's Intellectuals seek the skies
Reform'd and systematically rise.
. . . . .
Great Drummond rose: distemper's greatest foe.
Soft is his physic, softer still his voice,
Soft as the heavenly harmony of Boyce.
Not such as Broderip tortures into sound,
Broderip for frippery of taste renown'd,
Whose jarring hum-drum symphonies of flats
Rival the harmony of midnight cats.
What charms has music, when great Broderip sweats
To murder sound to what his brother sets!
With scraps of Ballad Tunes and *gude Scotch sangs*,
Which godlike Ramsey to his Bagpipes twangs,
With tattered fragments of forgotten Plays,
With Playford's melody to Sternhold's Lays.
This Pipe of Science, mighty Broderip comes
And a strange unconcerted jumble strums;
Roused to Devotion by a sprightly air
Danced into Piety and jigged to Prayer.
A modern Hornpipe's murder greets our Ears,
The Heavenly Music of Domestic Spheres;
Sacred to sleep in this inverted Key
Dull doleful Diapasons die away,
Lull'd by the doleful vacancy of Sound
The Vicar slumbers and the snoar (*sic*) goes round,
Whilst Broderip at his passive Organ groans
Through all his dumb variety of tones.

How unlike Allen! Allen is divine!
Has something sentimental, tender, fine.
No superficial whimsies e'er disgraced
His more refin'd, his sentimental taste.
He keeps the passions with the sound in play,
And the soul trembles with the trembling key.

Great Drummond rose: Children of Science hear;
And hear me from all prejudices clear.
Great the Offender, greater the offence,
'Tis against reason's law and common sense,
But if you credit Blackstone's first reports,
You'll find it no offence in lower Courts.
Since then deficiencies in Law are so,
Self punished let the beastly Culprit go.
He ended. Murmurs hail'd the speech divine,
The Sentence final and the accent fine.
All the rough Gang to mercy was inclin'd
For now the Clock struck three and none had din'd.

It is a curious circumstance connected with "The Exhibition" that it was not only written in London, but that the opening lines evidently refer to an exhibition of paintings in the metropolis, which had been visited if not opened by the King, and which had been contemptuously treated by Chatterton in his lines "To the Society at Spring Gardens" (page 216). This being the case, it becomes a moot question whether the youth was in Bristol during the inquiry instituted by the surgeons, or whether he had based his account of it on information furnished to him by some correspondent residing there; and it is not altogether idle speculation to conjecture who that correspondent was. It could not have been George Catcott, as all the story reflected strongly upon his relatives and friends, and failing him there was, apparently, only one person who could have known all the incidents of the meeting and have informed Chatterton of them. All things point to Barrett as the informant, to Barrett, the only person present at the inquiry who was treated respectfully and left unscarified by the poet. The verses concluded with the words, "End of the 1st Book, May 3rd, 1770," therefore it may be assumed that Chatterton intended to resume the subject, whether he did so or not.

## APPENDIX C

### WALPOLE

IT has already been intimated that people are unwilling to believe that a British nobleman—and Horace Walpole did eventually succeed to the Earldom of Orford—could persistently and maliciously strive to dishonour the memory of an unfortunate young poet, who had not committed some unpardonable offence. The fact that this nobleman continually referred to Chatterton as a criminal is, in the mind of the multitude, sufficient proof of the guilt of the accused. As Professor Skeat says, "Walpole no doubt thought that posterity would be sure to take his part as against Chatterton," adding, "I fail to see why it should be expected to do so."

Walpole judged correctly. He did his best to mislead posterity. After Chatterton's death, when biographies and memories of him began to be suggested, Walpole and his toadies flooded the periodicals with attacks on the dead boy's personal character; with sneers at the meanness of his talents, and warnings of the mischief which would arise from publishing a life of such a scoundrel. On the death of Barrett, who in his "History of Bristol" had published the correspondence which had passed between the dead poet and the living peer, Walpole not only assured his intimate acquaintances that he had never received or sent the letters asserted to have passed, but even circulated a note to the effect that "Mr. Walpole gives all his friends full authority to say that he never before saw the letters published by Mr. Barrett, in his 'History of Bristol,' as letters sent to him by Thomas Chatterton; and he wishes this to be generally known, lest after his death, some pretended answers to them should be produced as having been written by him."

Notwithstanding these positive assertions by Walpole, his letter to Chatterton, of March 28, 1769, in his own handwriting, is

still in existence, and may be seen in the British Museum, duly wafered, addressed, and postmarked, proving its delivery through the post; and Chatterton's letter to him, respecting the non-return of his manuscripts, was found amongst Walpole's papers by his executors.

Much of the mud which has smirched the reputation of the unfortunate Chatterton's character can be traced to Walpole; it is, therefore, as a corrective, although tardy, of the gross cruelty of the traducer, that the following facts respecting the assailant's own character are recalled to the light of day. It is within the knowledge of students of English literature that Walpole published the tale of "The Castle of Otranto" as a "translation from the Italian," and as soon as its success seemed assured gave forth that he was its author. The honesty of the transaction does not need discussion; nor is the forgotten assertion of the contemporary Press worth investigating, that the first statement was the true one, and that the story was taken from a foreign original:[1] nor need it be argued whether Walpole derived the plot and incidents of his drama, "The Mysterious Mother," from one of Chatterton's Rowley papers on a similar subject, instead of having written it, as he protested, when he was young. These are trivial matters compared with the graver offences of this nobleman. One of the most despicable crimes brought home to the man is his forgery of a letter pretended to be written to Rousseau by Frederick, King of Prussia. The story is related in Musset-Pethay's "Vie de Jean Jacques Rousseau"; in D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature"; in Delepierre's "Supercheries Littéraires," and in other works, so that there is no need to ignore the case. An account of the fraud is given in Mrs. F. Macdonald's recent work on Rousseau, wherein the mean and malicious nature of this dastardly outrage on the feelings and even personal security of an unfortunate broken-down author, by a man who did not even know him personally, is shown in its true colours.

In a letter still extant Walpole acknowledges to Hume that he is the author of this skilfully forged letter; which letter,

[1] The *European Magazine* of April, 1782, says there is "good reason to think and say that the 'Castle of Otranto' is a translation from the Italian."

purporting to come from a still living sovereign, who had just before offered an asylum in his own palace to the persecuted author, is the acme of insult and injury. The letter, given in full in Mrs. Macdonald's work, was widely circulated in France and England: it ridiculed and referred with spiteful irony to the misfortunes of the man to whom it was addressed, and being believed to come from his royal friend and protector, rendered Rousseau's position almost unbearable.[1] The manner of Walpole's confession adds to his offence, and the whole transaction is one of the shabbiest recorded in literary history. As a matter of fact Walpole hated men of genius and especially those who did not or would not toady to him. He wrote of "the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson"; referred to "the silly Goldsmith" as an "idiot"; spoke of Spenser with contempt; of Dante as "a Methodist parson in Bedlam," and declared that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was "forty times more nonsensical than the worst translation of any Italian opera-books"; of Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" as "a very insipid and tedious performance," and as "the dregs of nonsense"; and in his voluminous correspondence endeavoured to blast the reputations of numerous men and women, some of whom he was associating with at the time as a friend. No more despicable a man ever intruded his personality into the world of letters. To trace out all the misdeeds which have been brought home to the owner of Strawberry Hill would be a wretched task, but an idea of many of the culpable, dishonourable transactions in which he was concerned may be gained by reference to the *Quarterly Review* for July, 1822. That publication justly states, that "against all the rest of his fellow-creatures Walpole seems to have had the feelings of a tiger cat, sometimes sportive, sometimes ferocious, always cruel." After an exposure of several of the man's falsehoods and forgeries, not including any of those referred to in this work, the review concludes a criticism of Walpole's "Memoirs" by warning readers to "receive with extreme caution and doubt the evidence of a witness who in so many weighty points has been, we *may* almost say *convicted*, of all the arts of calumny, misrepresentation, and falsehood."

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[1] See *St. James's Chronicle*, April 3, 1766.

## APPENDIX D

### CHATTERTON'S BURIAL-PLACE

THE romantic story of the removal of Chatterton's body from London to Bristol and its burial in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff was first promulgated in 1829. In a note to a volume of his own "Poems and Essays," Joseph Cottle then averred that it had been ascertained that the poet's remains "were sent from London to Mrs. Chatterton at Bristol, in a box, by the wagon, by an uncle of Chatterton (a carpenter, who resided in London), and that he was buried by night in the churchyard of his own Redcliff Church. An elderly lady, but recently dead, a friend of Chatterton's mother, saw the body, and was enjoined by Mrs. Chatterton to keep the occurrence a profound secret, from its involving some hazard to the sexton."

It will be seen that this first reference to the "recently deceased" lady informant was about sixty years after the poet's death, and as she was Mrs. Chatterton's friend and was trusted by her with so important and profound a secret, it can be safely assumed that she was of mature age at the time, at any rate little under ninety, when Cottle, who does not give her name, spoke of her in 1829 as lately dead.

In 1837 John Dix published a "Life of Chatterton," and in the Appendix credited George Cumberland with a similar story of Chatterton's supposed burial at Bristol, together with an amount of circumstantial evidence in support of the tale. The names of several dead or undiscoverable persons were referred to as witnesses to the trustworthiness of the narrative. The more than dubious character of the Appendix having become known, this burial story was about to be relegated to that limbo whence so many tales told of Chatterton have been consigned, when George Pryce, a writer on architectural sub-

jects, in a work on "Memorials of the Canynges' Family," stated that he had obtained evidence to satisfy his readers that "the bones of the poor lad have rested undisturbed from the period of his death, *in his father's grave*, in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliff—there to mingle in consecrated ground with those he loved in life." After citing as authorities "Dix's Appendix" and the fabricated account of an inquest on Chatterton, the fraudulent nature of which imposture is too notorious to need any further refutation, George Pryce quotes the additional evidence he has obtained regarding this alleged Bristol burial. Joseph Cottle, of whose want of accuracy *in his old age*, when speaking of the "Burgham Pedigree," something has already been said, wrote to Sholto Vere Hare, on the 11th of January, 1853, to the following effect, and this constitutes the new evidence: ". . . You are probably unaware that Chatterton, instead of having been buried in the graveyard of Shoreditch [Shoe Lane] Workhouse, was buried *in our Redcliffe Church Yard.* I will state to you the evidence on which this fact rests and which quite satisfies my mind.

"About forty years ago, Mr. Geo. Cumberland (a descendant of Bishop Cumberland, a literary and highly respectable man whom I well knew) called on me and said, 'I have ascertained one important fact respecting Chatterton.'—'What is it?' I replied.—'It is,' said he, 'that that marvellous boy was buried in Redcliffe Churchyard.' He continued, 'I am just come from conversing with old Mrs. Edkins, a friend of Chatterton's mother: she affirmed to me this fact with the following explanation.' Thus Mrs. Edkins: 'Mrs. Chatterton was passionately fond of her darling and only son, Thomas,[1] and when she heard that he had destroyed himself, she immediately wrote to a relation of hers (the poet's uncle, then residing in London), a carpenter, urging him to send down his body in a coffin or box. The box was accordingly sent down to Bristol, and when I called on my friend Mrs. Chatterton to condole with her, she, as a great secret, took me upstairs and shewed me the box, and removing the lid, I saw the poor boy, whilst his mother sobbed in silence. She told me she should have him taken out in the middle of the night and bury him in Redcliffe Churchyard.

[1] She had had another son who died in infancy.

Afterwards when I saw her, she said she had managed it very well, so that none but the sexton and his assistant knew anything about it. This secrecy was necessary, or he could not be buried in consecrated ground.'

"This evidence I think quite sufficient to satisfy all reasonable minds. . . .

"Very truly yours,

"JOSEPH COTTLE."

Upon investigation there appears every reason to believe that this circumstantial narrative is founded upon fabricated testimony. In the first place, why did Cottle not give the whole story in 1829 in his "Poems and Essays," wherein he related every item he could gather to make his story of Chatterton picturesque and pathetic? Secondly, why did George Cumberland not include this statement in the account he furnished John Dix as to what Mrs. Edkins had told him? The account ascribed to her of Chatterton and his surroundings is lengthy, circumstantial, and minute, although *most of it can be shown to be false* and the remainder improbable. Why should so interesting an item be kept back? Moreover, the narrative ascribed to Mrs. Edkins in Dix's Appendix ends thus: she states that she saw Mrs. Chatterton "soon after the death of her son. She told her she came chiefly to inquire after her health. 'Aye,' she said, 'and something else?' She then burst into a flood of tears, and they sat and wept together, *but no more was said till they parted.*" Therefore, Mrs. Edkins, in her last remark, was either untruthful to Cumberland, or else her story to Cottle was false, *if she ever told it.*

It is a curious circumstance that Cumberland, according to the Appendix to Dix's "Life of Chatterton," published in 1837, had furnished a somewhat similar story of the poet's burial in Bristol, giving a Mrs. Stockwell, the wife of a basket-maker, as his authority, so that Cottle's letter, instead of corroborating the tale, renders it more improbable. It should be stated that when he wrote the letter quoted to Sholto Vere Hare, Cottle was a very old man, dying not long afterwards in his eighty-fourth year; it is therefore charitable to suppose that he had confused the curious stories Cumberland had told him, or he had read in Dix, many years ago, and thus imputed to Mrs.

Edkins what had been ascribed to Mrs. Stockwell. It must not be overlooked, however, that this same Cottle, who, when editing Chatterton's works in 1803, has said simply and truly that the boy poet was "about sixteen years of age" when he called on Burgum, the pewterer, and informed him he had his pedigree at home, and had discovered from it that the man was allied to several distinguished families, in 1829, ignoring or forgetting his printed and signed statement of twenty-six years before, fabricated an entirely different story. In his new account of Chatterton's visit, "in his blue-coat habiliments," when he must have been some months under fifteen, Cottle invents a highly coloured conversation, told *verbatim*, between Burgham (*sic*) and the lad, all new and never before reported.

It does appear strange that a highly respected man like Cottle, who speaks with honest indignation of the tricks played with Chatterton's Rowley Manuscripts by Catcott and Barrett, and a nobleman, as Walpole was, who speaks of the "forgeries" and "impositions" of Chatterton, should both be discovered to have been guilty, but in higher degree, of the very offences they accuse others of.

The alleged burial of Chatterton's body at St. Mary Redcliff churchyard rests entirely upon the alleged statement of a Mrs. Stockwell to George Cumberland, according to Dix's account, and no corroborative evidence of the circumstance has been obtained. George Price, writing to *Notes and Queries* three years after he had published the above quoted letter from Cottle, declared that he believed the whole of Cottle's statement "to have been made without the slightest foundation in truth," adding, "Mr. Cumberland was not sufficiently careful in examining the veracity of the evidence which he procured." C. V. Le Grice shows that Mrs. Newton, the poet's sister, had no knowledge of her brother's remains having been buried anywhere but in London. Judging the whole matter impartially, the only conclusion to be arrived at is, that there is not the slightest iota of trustworthy testimony to show that the poet's remains were buried anywhere else than in "The Pit," belonging to Shoe Lane Workhouse.

In his "Homes and Haunts of the British Poets" Howitt states it appeared from inquiries he had made that the burial spot in Shoe Lane had been identified, and that a headstone

has been erected there by some of Chatterton's admirers. The *Art Journal* said the spot was pointed out where the poet was buried, and "a rough white stone" was remembered to have been "set in a wall near the grave," with "Thomas Chatterton and something else scratched into it." The same account refers to "all the bones" from the Shoe Lane burial-ground having been "moved to the old graveyard in Gray's Inn Road," but Howitt, in his ultra-dramatic story of the removal, deems it most probable that the poor young poet's remains were scattered, no one knows whither.

# APPENDIX E

## ROWLEY POEMS

ALL that the reader is likely to wish to know of the inception and promulgation of the Rowley poems has been gone into fully in the preceding narrative. There is no longer any speculation as to their authorship. It has been decided for all time that they are the production of Thomas Chatterton. All that remains to be given is a concise account of the poems themselves.

The earliest known and most popular of these poems is "The Execution of Sir Charles Bawdin," commonly miscalled "The Bristowe Tragedie." Chatterton's relatives at home were generally unable to appreciate his antique productions, but when he read this beautiful ballad to his mother, Mrs. Newton records that she admired it greatly and asked him if he had made it. He replied, "I found the argument and versified it." An investigation as to how much he found of "the argument," or how much he invented, would be useless, and it is only desirable to know what the piece is like. The language of the poem, when it was first produced by Chatterton, was less disguised in antique spelling than were most of his later pieces; but after it had passed through the hands of George Catcott, it was discovered to have suffered by revision. It is the first of the Rowley poems published after the author's death; it was issued in 1772, at the instance, apparently, of George Catcott, and upon its appearance Walpole, who never neglected an opportunity of depreciating Chatterton's work, ignoring editorial statements wrote to Mason, "Somebody, I fancy Dr. Percy, has produced a dismal, dull ballad, called "The Execution of Sir Charles Bawdin," and given it for one of the Bristol poems, called Rowley's."

The hero of the ballad is supposed to typify a Sir Baldwin Fulford, a zealous Lancastrian, whose execution had been ordered by Edward IV., but there is no absolute certainty of the historic truth of any of the incidents related in the Tragedie. The poem opens in a spirited, natural style :—

"The feathered songster, Chanticleer,
Had wound his bugle horn,
And told the early villager
The coming of the morn.

King Edward saw the ruddy streaks
Of light eclipse the gray;
And heard the raven's croaking throat
Proclaim the fated day.

'Thou'rt right,' quoth he, 'for, by the God
That sits enthroned on high!
Charles Bawdin, and his fellows twain,
To-day shall surely die.'"

The character of Bawdin is depicted with the directness and simplicity of the early balladists, and some exalted thoughts are beautifully expressed by the boy poet in his delineation of the worthy knight, as when he makes him say he "summed the actions of the day each night before I slept"; an expression which impressed Shelley so strongly that, somewhat diluted and impoverished, he reproduced it in his youthful poem, "Queen Mab."

Bawdin's assertion that the tyrant usurper may destroy his body but cannot injure his mind, is scarcely accordant with the words of the olden poets, yet is not out of keeping with the lofty tone of the poem. The parting of the condemned knight from his wife is as manly as it is pathetic, and his accusatory words to the king, whom he beholds at the window, are dignified and noble, and so touch home, that—

"King Edward's soul rushed to his face,
He turned his head away";

and he was compelled to exclaim—

"Behold the man! he spoke the truth!
He's greater than a King!"

The most important of the Rowley poems, on account of its powerful delineation of character and the sagacity of its dramatic treatment, is the play, or, as Chatterton elected to style it, the "Tragycal Enterlude, or Disoorseynge Tragedie," of "Ælla." Its author had a due appreciation of the value of his drama, and described it to Dodsley, the publisher, as "a beauteous piece," and says, "It is a perfect Tragedy; the plot clear, the language spirited, and the Songs (interspersed in it) are flowing, poetical, and elegantly simple; the similes judiciously applied"; a description that could scarcely be more correctly or concisely rendered. Dean Milles, whose chief object was to prove the superiority of this work over anything Chatterton could possibly have written, states that in "Ælla" "the qualities necessary to give grace and beauty to such a representation were, simplicity of idea, sentiment, and expression, natural and obvious images," and many other "characteristics of the Greek tragedians." And the learned Dean finds that "if the tragedy of 'Ælla' be examined by these rules, it will be found to agree with them almost in every instance"; in fact, is so full of beauties that could only be acquired by a learned person of great worldly knowledge and ripe experience, it was utterly impossible for it to have been the production of "a youth of sixteen, born and bred in indigence, newly discharged from a school, where the intention of the establishment was fully satisfied with reading and writing well."

The drama so highly and justly commended is prefaced by a poetic "Epistle to Mastre Canynge," which strikes this keynote in the first stanza:—

"'Tis sung by Minstrels, that in ancient time,
When Reason hid herself in clouds of night,
The Priest delivered all the law in rhyme;
Like painted tilting-spear to please the sight,
The which in its fell use doth make much dere[1]
As did their ancient song deftly delight the ear."

[1] Harm.

Rowley's unmonkish opinion of the ancient dramatic mysteries is thus given in the concluding stanza of the Epistle :—

"Plays made from holy tales I hold unmeet;
Let some great story of a man be sung;
When as a man, we God and Jesus treat,
In my poor mind, we do the Godhead wrong.
But let no words, which chasteness may not hear,
Be placëd in the same. Adieu until anere."[1]

A further "Letter to Mastre Canygne" follows, full of humour and marvellous grasp of character, displaying a knowledge of all things a lad of his years would be expected to be deficient in. Finally, the drama commences. Ælla, warden of Bristol castle, has just been married to Birtha, and the newly-wedded pair are being entertained by the poetic efforts of various minstrels, whose songs are by no means the least interesting portion of the play.

A "Minstrel's Song," with stanzas alternately sung by a man and woman, is replete with humour and rustic simplicity, telling the complete story of a pastoral wooing in a few lines. A second ballad in quite a different note follows, and is highly appreciated by the poet's admirers for its descriptive touches of nature. This is succeeded by a song purporting to be by Sir Thybbot Gorges, one of that brilliant band of bards which scintillates around Mastre Canynge. This metrical composition is in a lighter vein and quite unlike anything known of fifteenth-century poetry. As Warton pointed out, it is not unsuited to the comic poetry of modern times, especially by the use in it of double rhymes, so suggestive of the burlesque. It is worth quoting, as a specimen of Chatterton's powers in a style so different from his other works :—

"As Elinour by the green arbour was sitting,
As from the sun's heat she harried,[2]
She said, as her white hands white hosen were knitting,
'What pleasure it is to be married!

[1] Next time. [2] Hurried.

'My husband, Lord Thomas, a forester bold,
As ever clove pin or the basket,[1]
Does no kind of comfort from Elinour hold,
I have it as soon as I ask it.

'When I lived with my father in merry Cloud-dell,
Tho' 'twas at my choice to mind spinning,
I still wanted something, but what could not tell,
My father's barbed[2] hall had naught winning.[3]

'Each morning I rise, do I order my maidens,
Some to spin, some to curdle, some bleaching,
If any new entered do ask for my aidance,
Then swiftly you find me a-teaching.

'Lord Walter, my father, he loved me well,
And nothing unto me was needing,
But should I again go to merry Cloud-dell,
In sooth it would be without redeynge.'[4]

She said, and Lord Thomas came over the lea,
As he the fat deerkins was chasing.
She put up her knitting, and to him went she;
So we leave them both kindly embracing."

On the conclusion of this merry song, the harmony of the wedding festivities is interrupted by the arrival of messengers, who announce an incursion of the Danes, and call on Ælla to lead the troops against the invaders. Naturally Birtha is loath to let her newly-wedded husband go, and she makes most pathetic appeals to his love to keep him, but honour calls, and he has to depart. The following day, Ælla engages the invaders and puts them to flight, but is severely wounded in so doing. Celmond, one of his officers, entertains a guilty love for Birtha, which overpowers his sense of honour and duty to his

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[1] Terms in archery.
[2] Armed, but applied properly to horses only.
[3] Alluring.
[4] Advice.

chieftain. He makes use of Ælla's wound to entice the lady from her home, and under the plea that her husband needs her presence, gets her to leave with him. In a lonely part of the forest he declares his lawless passion to her. Her cries are overheard by a party of the defeated Danes, in charge of their chieftain, Hurra, who rescues her and slays the treacherous Celmond. The generous Hurra, learning who the lady is, escorts her towards her husband's camp.

In the meantime messengers reach Ælla and inform him that his wife has fled from home with Celmond. With unnatural haste, with an improbability that is the chief blot on the drama, the wounded man at once assumes that his newly-wedded wife has forsaken him for another, and in the misery caused by the presumed desertion, stabs himself. As he is dying Birtha arrives, in the care of Hurra, and explains all. It is too late. The impetuous hero dies as his wife falls fainting on his body.

The various personages of the play are clearly individualised, and the situations are cleverly, if somewhat melodramatically, put before the audience. Numerous quotations of high poetic value can be gleaned from "Ælla," and it is scarcely depreciating their worth to say that they are frequently suggestive of a close study of Shakespeare, as, indeed, is this charmingly pathetic roundelay sung by the minstrels to Birtha during her husband's absence:—

"O! synge unto mie roundelaie,
O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee
Daunce no more atte hallie daie,
Like a running ryver bee;
Mie love is dedde,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Black his hair as the wintere nighte,
Whyte hys skin as the summer snow,
Red his face as the mornynge lyghte,
Cold he lyes ynne the grave belowe;
Mie love is dedde,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick inn dance as thoughte canne bee,
Deft his tabour, cudgelle stout,
O! hee lyes bie the willow-tree:
Mie love is dedde,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

Harke! the raven flags his wing,
In the briared dell below;
Harke! the dethe-owle loud doth sing,
To the nyghte-mares as they goe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to his deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

See! the white moone shines onne hie;
Whiter is my true love's shroud;
Whiter than the mornynge skie,
Whiter than the evening cloud;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to his deathe-bedde,
All under the willow-tree.

Heere, upon mie true love's grave,
Shall the barren flowers be layde,
Not one holy saint to save,
All the coldness of a mayde.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
Alle under the wyllow-tree.

Wythe mie hands I'lle plant the briars
Round his holy cross to gre,[1]
Elfish fairie, light your fires,
Heere mie boddie styll shall bee.
Mie love is dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
Al under the wyllow-tree.

[1] Grow.

Come, wythe acorn-cup and thorn,
Drayne mie heart's blodde awaie ;
Lyfe and all its goode I scorn,
Daunce bie night, or feaste by daie.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gone to hys deathe-bedde,
All under the wyllowe-tree."

"Ælla" was evidently a favourite hero with the boy poet, who frequently refers to his mythical "Lord of the Castle of Bristol in days of yore." In some commonplace verses supposed to be sent by Rowley as a challenge to "Johne Ladgate" (presumedly Lydgate, Chaucer's disciple), to outdo him in versification, the Bristol priest is represented by a "Song to Ælla," the opening lines of which boldly put in this claim for immortality :—

"Oh, thou, or what remains of thee,
Ælla, the darling of futurity,
Let this my song bold as thy courage be,
As everlasting to posterity."

The metre of the different stanzas of this song varies from time to time ; the third stanza is strongly reminiscent of Drayton's fine ballad of "Agincourt" :—

"Drawn by the weapon fell,
Down to the depth of hell
Thousands of Dacians went ;
Bristolians men of might,
Dared then the bloody fight,
And acted deeds full quent."[1]

Ladgate's lines in response are as poor as Rowley's are good, and show no trace of the boy's work. They may not be his : the original manuscript copy of them in the British Museum is certainly not in Chatterton's handwriting, any more than is a twelve-folio page manuscript sold in a London auction-room, some few years ago, as "the first draft of Chatterton's master-

[1] Quaint.

piece, 'Ælla.'" It was stated that the spelling of this manuscript, which realised £255, "is of Chatterton's period throughout," and that "it was undoubtedly an afterthought of his to utilise the orthography of the period of the supposed Thomas Rowley," in the conversion of a comparatively modern work entitled "Eldred" into the pseudo-archaic drama of "Ælla." That such a process of antiquating his productions was adopted by Chatterton is certain, but that this "Eldred" is one of his works is more than doubtful. There would not be much difficulty in proving by experts whose calligraphy the manuscript is in, and that it is not Chatterton's seems equally certain. Some one, probably from pecuniary reasons, has translated the Rowleyese drama into modern English.

Wilson, writing under some unaccountable misunderstanding, says that "'Ælla,' Chatterton's masterpiece, is professedly *the work of an elder poet than* Rowley, 'modernised' by the old priest for his patron's behoof," but the manuscript gives no such information. It is stated to be "wrotenn bie Thomas Rowleie," and to have been played before Master Canynges, when the character of Ælla was taken "bie Thomas Rowleie, preeste, the Aucthoure." The priest could not have been "old" either at that period; but Wilson's narrative is at times strangely inaccurate and misleading.

Of "Goddwyn," another metrical tragedy ascribed to Rowley, only a fragment remains. It is ushered into notice by a "Prologue, made bie Maistre William Canynge." The spirited introductory stanzas of this prologue might have suited an audience in Chatterton's days, but in the monkish time of Edward the Fourth would have procured their author excommunication, and not improbably something worse.

Modernised they read thus:—

"Whilom by penmen much ungentle name
Have upon Godwin, Earl of Kent been laid,
Thereby bereaving him of faith and fame;
Relentless ministers have said,
That he was known to do no holy wurche;[1]
But this was all his fault, he gifted not the church

[1] Work.

The author of the piece which we enact,
Albeit a clergyman, truth will write,
In drawing of his men no wit is lackt;
Even a king might be full pleased to-night.
Attend, and note the parts to be done:
We for to better do, do challenge any one."

Not Godwin, but his son Harold, the people's favourite, is the real hero of this drama. He poses as a typical liberator of his native land from the thraldom of the foreigners, too much favoured by the reigning sovereign, Edward the Confessor. The king is represented as a priest-ridden bigot, wholly out of sympathy with his English subjects. The play starts well, but just as it is becoming interesting and the plot begins to unravel, the fragment breaks off with the grand invocation by Chorus, already quoted in the biographical portion of this work. It has been surmised that Chatterton did complete this drama, although so small a portion is now known; and it is thought that the missing scenes may have been destroyed in the terrible anguish preceding its author's last moments.

Another drama, or "Enterlude," styled "The Apostate," has disappeared, only a few lines quoted in the notes to a manuscript of "The Parliament of Sprytes" having been preserved. "Thy pride will be aleeste," or "humbled," according to Rowley, appears in the introduction as well as the four following lines:—

"Not goulde or bighes[1] wylle brynge thee heaven were,
Ne kyne or mylkie flockes upon the playne,
Ne mannours rych nor banners brave and fayne,
Ne wise the sweetest of the erthlie trayne."

The orthography of this specimen of Rowley has evidently been revised by Barrett.

The "English Metamorphosis," although ascribed to Rowley, is imitated from the second book of Spenser's "Faëry Queen," a work written a century and a half after the period in which the Bristolian priest was supposed to be living! It deals with the legendary history of Locrine, the British king, whose adven-

[1] Jewels.

tures have engaged the pens of many English poets, from Shakespeare to Swinburne. In Chatterton's version of the story he employs his revision of the Spenserian stanza, telling the tale in vigorous verse.

A more noteworthy effort of the Rowleyean muse is the piece styled "The Tournament." It may be remembered that in writing to his friend Baker, in March, 1768, Chatterton says: "'The Tournament,' I have only one canto of, which I send herewith; the remainder is entirely lost," but it has been suggested by Professor Skeat, with great probability, that the reference is not to the fine poem about the Bristol Tilting before Edward the First, but to a fragment entitled "The Unknown Knight, or the Tournament," of which only one canto remains. "The Tournament" proper was apparently written to confirm the theory that a Sir Simon de Burton was really the founder of a church dedicated to "Our Ladie," on the site now occupied by St. Mary Redcliff. It is one of the "original" manuscripts Barrett obtained from Chatterton, and of assisting in the manufacture of which the surgeon was, probably, not guiltless. It is styled "Vita Burtoni," and recounts in pseudo-antique prose the story the poet tells herein in verse. Who Sir Simon Burton was, and how he came to build a church in honour of the "Holye Virgynne Marye, Moder of Godde," is fully set forth in the poem. Edward the First is supposed to be keeping Christmas, in 1285, at Bristol, and, having many doughty warriors in his train, establishes a three days' "jouste" outside the city. Several knights of renown have their prowess tested in tilting matches, until at last Sir Ferrars Neville remains conqueror over all who have ventured into the lists. Then it is that Sir Simon de Burton, supposed to be a wealthy merchant and an alderman of Bristol, vows that, if he succeed in overthrowing Sir Ferrars, he will build a church on the spot, and dedicate it to our Lady.

Neville and several of his comrades, including a Sir John de Burghamme, are speedily disposed of by Sir Simon, who then takes a rest, whilst a stranger knight holds the field, and in his turn vanquishes five other knights. This result puts Burton upon his mettle; he challenges and overthrows the unknown tilter. Before encountering him, however, the valorous, but

somewhat too braggart alderman makes the vow referred to, and in these terms :—

"By thee, Saint Mary, and thy Son, I swear
That in what place yon doughty knight shall fall,
Against the strong push of my stretched-out spear,
There shall arise a holy church's wall,
The which in honour, I will Mary call,
With pillars large, and spire full high and round,
And this I faithfully will stand to all,
If yonder stranger falleth to the ground.
Stranger, be ready; I challenge you to war;
Sound, sound, the trumpets, to be heard from far."

Chatterton narrates this romantic legend in a highly poetic strain, not free, however, from cruel, bloodthirsty incidents which he deems characteristic, as they were, of the period he was singing, but are introduced too frequently and too melodramatically in his versified tales of olden times to gratify a modern audience. "The Tournament" is a concise and complete story, but another quasi-historical chronicle, "The Battle of Hastings," is a production of quite another kind. Notwithstanding its great length, it is only a fragment, or rather two fragments, and never arrives at any conclusion, not even getting as far as the death of King Harold.

The history of this poem is curious. The record runs that one day Chatterton handed to Barrett the manuscript of an incomplete metrical work, endorsed "'The Battle of Hastings,' wrote by Turgot the Monk, a Saxon in the tenth century, and translated by Thomas Rowlie, parish preeste of St. John's, in the city of Bristol, in the year 1465. The remainder of the poem I have not been happy enough to meet with." The lad evidently thought that 1066 was in the tenth century!

It is said that Barrett urged Chatterton so strongly to bring him the original manuscript of this poem, that the youth was at last obliged to confess that he was the author, and had written the poem himself for a friend. Seeing that the transcript was in the same orthography that the other Rowley pieces were, and that the composition was equal to and even similar to the other works from the supposed antique parchments, that confession

would have thoroughly opened the eyes of the surgeon, had he not been wilfully blind. Whatever his remarks may have been, he was satisfied by Chatterton's promise to bring him another poem on the same theme, really written by Rowley. After an interval sufficiently long for the youth to have composed it, he did hand Barrett a second and even longer poem on "The Battle of Hastings," written in a similar style to the first, and this the surgeon accepted as the veritable production of Turgot translated by Rowley.

Despite numerous true poetic passages, fine similes and brilliant descriptions, these long drawn-out epical "Battles of Hastings" are too tedious for the present generation, and weary the reader with frequent repetition of tragic incidents and scenes of bloodshed. The second of the poems is finer in construction, more fluent in style, and more modern in tone than the earlier "Battle," but both are evidently from the same pen.

Various eclogues, or pastoral poems, full of rustic artlessness and simplicity, are included in the Rowley poems, and are further proof of their author's versatility. The first of these eclogues, as published in most collections, consists of a dialogue between two peasants, both of whom have suffered in "The Barons' War," one the loss of his father, and the other of his only son. A modernised version of the first stanza will show the vigorous, manly style of the youthful author :—

"When England, smoking from her deadly wound,
From her galled neck did pluck the chains away,
Knowing her lawful sons fall all around,
(Mighty they fell, 'twas Honour led the fray).
Then in a dell, by eve's dark mantle gray,
Two lonely shepherds did a sudden fly,
(The rustling leaf doth their white hearts affray).
And with the owlet trembled and did cry :
First Robert Neatherd his sore bosom stroke,
Then fell upon the ground and thus he spoke."

A second eclogue deals with "Cœur de Lion's" victory over the Saracens. It is a kind of pæan sung by "the pious Nigel" over the exploits of the English in Palestine, concluding with

the reception of the singer's father on his triumphant return by his poetic son. A noble feature of this piece is the refrain which, with slight variations, finishes off each stanza.

A discourse between "A Man, a Woman, and Sir Roger," the priest, is the subject of another of these pastoral pieces. It opens with the author's invocation :—

"Wouldst thou ken Nature in her better part ?
Go search the huts and hovels of the hind ;
If they have any, it is rough made art.
In them you see the native form of kind.
Haveth your mind a liking of a mind ?
Would it ken everything as it might be ;
Would it hear phrase of vulgar from the hind,
Without wiseacre words and knowledge free ?
If so read this, which I disporting penned,
If (naught) beside, its rhyme may it commend."

In the chat between the man and the woman is discussed the eternal question of the disparity between the wealthy and the poor : why the peasant should labour for the rich. They put the subject to the parson Sir Roger, for his explanation, which, as recorded by the poet, is not very satisfactory, and reads as if it were not intended to be. The last of these rustic pieces is of a more poetic nature, and is alluded to by Dr. Gregory, Chatterton's first biographer, as "one of the most pathetic tales I have ever read."

This eclogue, "Elinor and Juga," is the poem referred to by Thistlethwaite, in his reminiscences of the young poet. It describes the sorrows of two maidens whose lovers have been slain in the "Wars of the Roses," betwixt the houses of York and Lancaster. It is of a highly romantic tone ; somewhat too deeply imbued with the Mrs. Radcliffe spirit to suit the more prosaic tendencies of later times, and deprived of the Rowley language loses much of its charm. One stanza will suffice to display its mannerisms :—

"Sisters in sorrow, on this daisied bank,
Where Melancholy broods, we will lament

Be wet with morning dew and even dank;
Like stricken oaks in each the other bent;
Or like forsaken halls of merriment,
Where ghastly ruins hold the train of fright,
Where boding ravens bark, and owlets wake the night."

If not displaying such strokes of genius as do other pieces of the Rowley poems, Chatterton's "Story of William Canynge" is of more importance with respect to the authorship than the other metrical productions of the collection from the fact that, according to Cottle, the first thirty-four lines of it are, with the exception of one short poem, the only scrap of poetry produced as an "original Rowley" on vellum by their youthful discoverer. All the other pieces are "transcripts" by Chatterton, or in the handwriting of his copyists, Barrett and George Catcott. This account of Canynges is completed from a copy of the entire poem furnished by Catcott, revised by another copy in the possession of Barrett, and is intended to supplement, or be included in, the prose history of the "painters, carvers, poets, and other eminent natives of Bristol, from the earliest times" to the days of Rowley himself. The reputed author introduces his theme in this wise :—

"Aside a brooklet as I lay reclined,
Listening to hear the waters glide along,
Minding how thorough the green meads it twined
Awhilst the caves responsed its muttering song,
At distance, rising Avon to be sped,
Mingled with rising hills, did show its head."

Whilst he (Rowley) is musing by the river's bank, thinking of the many famous men who have dwelt or fought by that Avon, he beholds a beauteous maiden arise from the stream. She informs the priest-poet that she is Truth, and telling him that she has beheld many warriors and learned men and others of renown, adds :—

"But there's a Canynge to increase the store,
A Canynge, who shall buy up all their fame;"

and commands him to take her power and behold what true

nobility there was in the man. Then, Rowley forgotten in his poetic fervour, Chatterton exclaims :—

"Straight was I carried back to times of yore,
Whilst Canynge swathëd yet in fleshly bed,
And saw all actions which had been before,
And all the scroll of Fate unravellëd ;
And when the fate-marked babe acome to sight
I saw him eager, gasping after light.

In all his simple gambols and child's play,
In every merry-making, fair, or wake,
I kenned a scattered light of Wisdom's ray ;
He ate down learning with the wastel cake,
As wise as any of the aldermen,
He'd wit enough to make a mayor at ten."

Rowley proceeds to recount in verse the story of Canynges's career, concluding with the couplet :—

"'This is the man of men,' the vision spoke ;
Then bell for evensong my senses woke."

The same story, it should be stated, is written out more fully in prose, and with many more picturesque embellishments, in another of the Rowley documents, published in the *Town and Country Magazine* for November, 1775, five years after Chatterton's death. Three shorter pieces, in which it is sought to combine the glories of St. Mary Redcliff with those of the supposed rebuilder of them, William Canynges junior, find a place in the Rowley poems, the last of the three ending with the suggestive lines :—

"Then all did go to Canynge's house,
An interlude to play,
And drink his wine and ale so good,
And pray for him for aye."

And "an interlude," said to have been played by the Carmelite Friars, at Master Canynges's great house, is "The Parliament of Sprites," the joint production of Thomas Rowley and John Iscam. The Introduction, by Queen Mab, tells in

sprightly verse how, at the "witching hour of night," the sprites of famous men revisit the earth, "and take their walk the churchyard through." Amongst the sprites who appear and speak in presumably characteristic terms are Nimrod, the great hunter, with a chorus of Assyrians, and various Bristolians, best known through Rowley's verse, all of whom pay homage to the grandeur of Redcliff Church and the nobility of its presumed builder, Chatterton's ideal man, Canynges.

A truly noble poem, "The World," which originally appeared in Barrett's "History of Bristol," has somehow failed to attract that notice it deserves, and which some of the Rowley poems with less claims to admiration have obtained. It was, probably, suggested to Chatterton by the interlude of the "Seven Deadly Sins" in Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus;" and is one of the many proofs, exhibited by allusions and sentences in the Rowley poems, that their author was a sympathetic student of Marlowe's works. It is not claiming too much to say that in this poem Chatterton has improved upon his prototype; not, of course, that it is likely Marlowe himself invented those particular "Seven Deadly Sins"; they are, evidently, some of the "additions" by a weaker pen. In "The World" minstrels, garbed as sprites, are called forth by a father to warn his young son of the alluring falsehoods of life, and to counsel him how to get wealth. The poem, as modernised, is as follows:—

"*Father.* New to the World and its deceptive way
This youngster, son of mine, is all my care;
Ye minstrels, warn him how with care he stray
Where gilded vice doth spread his netted Snare.
To getting wealth I would he should be bred,
And crowns of ruddy gold, not glory, bind his head.

1 *Minstrel.* My name is Interest, 'tis I
Doth into all bosoms fly;
Each one's hidden secret's mine;
None so worthy, good, and dyne,[1]
But will find it to his cost,
Interest will rule the roast.
I to every one give laws,
Self is first in every cause.

[1] Worthy.

2 *Min.* I am a vagrant flame
Of flick'ring melancholy :
Love some do call my name,
Some bename me Folly.
In sprites of melting mould
I set my burning seal ;
To me a miser's gold
Doth not a pin avail.
I prey upon the health,
And from good counsel flee ;
The man who would get wealth
Must never think of me.

3 *Min.* I am the imp of Pride, my haughty head
Would reach the clouds and still be rising high ;
Too little is the earth to be my bed,
Too narrow for my breathing place the sky.
Scornful I see the world beneath me lie.
But to my betters I so little gree,[1]
Less than the shadow of a shade I be ;
'Tis to the small alone that I can multiply.

4 *Min.* I am the imp of Usury ; look around,
The airs about me thieves do represent ;
Bloodstained robbers spring from out the ground,
And airy visions swarm around my ente.[2]
O save my monies, it is their intent
To filch the red God of my frighted sprite,
What joy can usurers have, or day or night !

5 *Min.* Vice be hight, or gold full oft I ride,
Full fair unto the sight for aye I seem ;
My ugliness with golden veils I hide,
Laying my lovers in a silken dream ;
But when my untrue pleasures have been tried,
Then do I show all horrorness and rou[3]
And those I have in net would fain my grip eschew.

[1] Seem. [2] Purse. [3] Ugliness.

6 *Min.* I am great Death; all ken me by the name,
But none can say how I do loose the sprite;
Good men my tarrying delay do blame,
But most rich usurers from me take flight;
Mickle of wealth I see where'er I came,
It doth my terror greatly multiply,
And maketh them afraid to live or die.

*Father.* How, villain Minstrels, and is this your rede?
Away, away! I will not give a curse.
My son, my son, of this my speech take heed,
Nothing is good that bringeth not to purse."

Allusion has already been made to a fragment called "The Unknown Knight, or The Tournament," one of those few literary fragmentary pieces the reader wishes for more of, and echoes the poet's desire to "call up him who left half told the story of Cambuscan bold." It is this clever piece that Mr. Watts-Dunton refers to in his critique, in "Ward's Poets," upon the influence of Chatterton's metrical construction upon the poetry of his most famous successors. With regard to the claim of Coleridge, when he spoke of the variations he had made in the iambic lines of "Christabel," as "founded on a new principle," Mr. Watts-Dunton points out that this new principle had been already used by Chatterton. He notes that Coleridge "has been much praised, and very justly, for such effects as this:—

"And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall;"

and compares them with similar results obtained by Chatterton; citing some lines of his which have the "Christabel ring," implying that Coleridge had got the "Rowley ring" from his youthful predecessor's lines; "the ring which Scott only half-caught, and which Byron failed to really catch at all," says the critic. He compares the variations introduced in "The Unknown Knight" with Coleridge's remarks of his own metres

in "correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion." Such variations, or transitions of mood, are most skilfully or probably, in this case, intuitively displayed in "The Unknown Knight," as :—

I.

"The Mattin-bell had sounded long,
The Cocks had sung their morning song,
When lo ! the tuneful Clarions' sound
(Wherein all other noise was drown'd)
Did echo to the rooms around,
And greet the ears of Champion strong ;
'Arise, arise from downy bed,
For Sun doth gin to shew his head.'

II.

Then each did don in seemly gear,
What armour each beseemed to wear,
And on each shield devices shone,
Of wounded hearts and battles won,
All curious and nice each one ;
With many a tasselled spear ;
And, mounted each one on a steed,
Unknown, made ladies' hearts to bleed.

. . . . .

IV.

O'Rocke upon his courser fleet,
Swift as lightning were his feet,
First gained the lists and gat him fame ;
From West Hibernee Isle he came,
His might depictured in his name.
All dreaded such an one to meet ;
Bold as a mountain-wolf he stood,
Upon his sword sat grim and blood.

V.

But when he threw down his Asenglave,[1]
Next came in Sir Botelier bold and brave

[1] Gauntlet.

The death of many a Saracen ;
They thought him a devil from Hell's black den,
Not thinking that any of mortal men
Could send so many to the grave.
For his life to John Rumsey he rendered his thanks,
Descended from Godred, the King of the Manks.

. . . . .

VI.

Within his sure rest he settled his spear,
And ran at O'Rocke in full career ;
Their lances with the furious stroke
Into a thousand shivers broke,
Even as the thunder tears the oak,
And scatters splinters here and there:
So great the shock, their senses did depart,
The blood all ran to strengthen up the heart.

VII.

Sir Botelier Rumsie first came from his trance,
And from the Marshall took the lance ;
O'Rocke eke chose another spear,
And ran at Sir Botelier full career ;
His prancing steed the ground did tear ;
In haste he made a false advance ;
Sir Botelier seeing, with might amain,
Felled him down upon the plain.

VIII.

Sir Pigot Norlin at the Clarions' sound,
On a milk white steed with gold trappings around,
He couched in his rest his silver-point spear,
And fiercely ran up in full career ;
But for his appearance he paid full dear,
In the first course laid on the ground ;
Besmeared in the dust with his silver and gold,
No longer a glorious sight to behold.

IX.

Sir Botelier then having conquered his twain,
Rode conqueror off the tourneying plain.

Receiving a garland from Alice's hand,
The fairest lady in the land.
Sir Pigot this viewed, and furious did stand,
Tormented in mind and bodily pain.
Sir Botelier crowned, most gallantly stood,
As some tall oak within the thick wood."

There are a few more stanzas describing combats between other knights but differing little in results. The whole of the fragment is full of boyish fancy: of the glamour of Faeryland, free from the worldly taint which smirches the lad's later sarcastic verses.

Dealing with the effect of Chatterton's lyrical productions upon the work of the most eminent nineteenth-century poets of the Romantic school, Mr. Watts-Dunton, whose critique on the young poet's position in English literature is quite a revelation, asserts that "as to the romantic spirit, it would be difficult to name any one of his successors in whom the high temper of romance has shown so intense a life," and he points out, especially instancing the preceding ballad, how his metrical forms have been adopted and used by some of his most famous followers. Seeing his influence upon after poetry, "worked primarily through Coleridge," and his influence upon Shelley and Keats, and through "the enormous influence these latter have had on subsequent poets, it seems impossible to refuse to Chatterton the place of the father of the Romantic school." Of course, those remarks apply only to the Rowley poems; the modern pieces are all of the earth, earthy, and whatever their merits, have had little or no power over the minds of men of later times.

Besides the pieces already passed in review, there are several other pseudo-antique poems in the Rowley collections nearly all of which need revision, after collation with the original manuscripts. None of them seem to call for particular mention here, as most, if not all, of them are similar in style and metrical treatment to those dealt with. "The Merrie Tricks of Lamyngetowne," by Maistre John a Iscam, in the revised Spenserian metre, is the most important and longest; but, like many other pieces ascribed to the associates of Rowley, appears to have been left unfinished.

MONUMENT WITH CHATTERTON'S PORTRAIT, IN THE HERMITAGE, NEAR BATH.

From an old print.

To face p. 335.

## APPENDIX F

### PORTRAITS OF CHATTERTON

IN the "Dictionary of National Biography" Charles Kent states that of the eight reputed portraits of Chatterton, "one alone is of indisputable authenticity." As a matter of fact, the existence is known of many more than eight, but the authenticity of none is probable. The first of those mentioned by Charles Kent is a painting alleged to be by Hogarth. It was shown at the second exhibition of national portraits at South Kensington in 1867. It was lent by the Peel Park Museum, Salford, to which institution it had been given by Alderman Thomas Agnew in 1853. It has been proved conclusively that it could not be a painting by Hogarth of Thomas Chatterton, as Hogarth died before the poet was twelve years old, and the picture represents a youth of seventeen.

The second of these pseudo-portraits is referred to by Fulcher in his "Life of Gainsborough." He states: "It is said that Chatterton also sat to Gainsborough, and that the portrait of the marvellous boy, with his long flowing hair and childish face, is a masterpiece." Doubts having been expressed in *Notes and Queries* as to Gainsborough having ever painted such a portrait, two strangely differing accounts were sent to that publication as to the existence of the picture, but it was finally proved that no portrait of the young poet could have been made by the painter alleged. Various correspondents have written to assure me they possess the identical portrait, but not one is able to adduce any real evidence of authenticity.

The existence of the third "counterfeit presentment" scarcely calls for comment, as it is only known of by the supposititious account ascribed to Mrs. Edkins in the notorious Appendix to Dix's "Life of Chatterton." This unknown

portrait is said to have been painted by Francis Wheatley, a Royal Academician.

The fourth item in the list is in some respects the most interesting of the whole catalogue. It seems to indicate positively the existence of a known portrait of the poet, and being almost publicly exhibited a few years after his death would doubtless come under the gaze of some who had been personally acquainted with his features. It is "a profile in relief of the unfortunate boy," placed over a mausoleum in the grounds of The Hermitage, near Lansdowne Crescent, Bath, the residence of a Mr. Philip Thicknesse. Writing to the editor of the *Lady's Magazine*, in 1783, Mr. Thicknesse describes this memorial of Chatterton in somewhat sentimental terms, but in no way implies that the portrait is other than an authentic one. A view of it is given.

In the "Dictionary of National Biography" Mr. Kent says, "Chatterton is said to have drawn a picture of himself in his Blue-coat dress, being led by his mother towards the canopied altar-tomb of William Canynges. No such drawing, however, has been discovered." It is not stated by whom it "is said," but the reference is, doubtless, with variations, to one of John Dix's mythical stories. Chatterton could have made a portrait more or less faithful of himself if he had desired, but the origin of this legendary account may be traced to an illustration adorning the programme printed for a concert held at Bristol, in commemoration of Chatterton, at the Assembly Rooms, Friday, December 3, 1784. This picture shows "Genius conducting Chatterton, in the habit of a Blue-coat boy, to her altar," a somewhat tomb-like construction. Chatterton is portrayed as a chubby-cheeked boy having a large head showing the tonsure on it. St. Mary Redcliff Church is seen in the background. Nicholas Pocock, a well-known Bristol painter, was responsible for the design.

Number six refers to "an odious, fancy sketch, hideously out of drawing and execrably engraved," which "has for many years passed current among the printsellers as a portrait of Chatterton." This so-called portrait is stated by Evans to be from a picture belonging to the poet's sister. It is taken from a vignette published in *The Monthly Visitor* for January, 1797. It has no authority.

What Mr. Kent described as an "exquisite engraving" is of the boy's head prefixed to Dix's "Life of Chatterton," and issued as drawn by N. C. Branwhite. It is evidently a copy, with some slight variations, of the picture by Morris, a Bristol artist, formerly belonging to the Braikenridge family and bequeathed by Mr. W. J. Braikenridge to the Bristol Museum. It was purchased in 1821 from Mr. W. Sheppard, a Bristol bookseller, by Mr. George W. Braikenridge, and was said by Sheppard to have been bought from a Mr. George Burge, who stated that he had it from his landlord, and that he believed it to be a genuine portrait of Chatterton. The evidence against its authenticity is strong, but the tales told of its fictitious origin are too various and contradictory to entitle any of them to the credit they have obtained. In acknowledging the receipt from Dix of an engraved copy of this portrait, Southey wrote that he "immediately recognised a resemblance in the portrait to Mrs. Newton (Chatterton's sister), of whose countenance I seem to myself to have that strong impression which is retained of those whom we have seen with more than ordinary interest in early life." And again, in his "Life and Correspondence," vol. vi. p. 384, Southey declares: "The portrait of Chatterton which Mr. Dix discovered identifies itself, if ever portrait did. It brought his sister, Mrs. Newton, strongly to my recollection. No family likeness could be more distinctly marked considering the disparity of years." This is strong evidence in favour of the portrait, if not painted from Chatterton direct, being derived from a genuine picture of the lad, whom it depicts as about eight to ten years of age. At the age mentioned Chatterton was a pupil at Colston's, wearing the Blue-coat dress and having his hair cut short, whilst the picture by Morris is of a boy in a red coat, with long flowing hair. Fancy dress and wigs are not likely to have been in Chatterton's way, so that the authenticity of the portrait is hard to establish, but having no better effigies of the poet, and accepting Southey's testimony of the likeness to Mrs. Newton, it is offered to our readers for consideration. The original picture in the Bristol Museum has inscribed on the back of it, "T. Chatterton, A. Morris, Pinxt. March 25, 1762"; that is to say, when the poet was nine years and eight months old.

Charles Kent's list of eight portraits by no means exhausts

the number of supposititious pictures of the young bard. In a letter of the 18th of April, 1883, the Rev. Dr. H. P. Stokes wrote to the editor of the *Bristol Times and Mirror*, he drew attention to various presentments of Chatterton he had met with. Besides some of those above referred to he mentions the following: a sketch of the poet printed in blue on a large, apparently, cotton handkerchief, preserved in the British Museum. Dr. Stokes gives an account of this portrait from the *Westminster Magazine* of July, 1782, but is, it would seem, unaware that the print is taken from a popular copper-plate picture known as "The Distressed Poet." It is stated in the magazine that "the painting from which the engraving was taken of the distressed poet was the work of a friend of the unfortunate Chatterton. This friend drew him in the situation in which he is represented; . . . anxieties and cares had advanced his life, and had given him an older look than was suited to his age. The sorry apartment portrayed in the print, the folded bed, &c., are not the invention of fancy. They are realities."

Dr. Stokes speaks of a vignette, purporting to be of Chatterton, which appeared in the *Monthly Visitor* for January, 1797. He considers it the most remarkable of all the known portraits of the poet, and describes the face as very striking and as having struck him as most likely to be the original of them all. It does not appeal to us so strongly: it is from the same original as that described by Kent as "an odious fancy sketch." All these pseudo-portraits appear to point to some unknown primary picture.

Two other paintings referred to by Dr. Stokes are confessedly imaginative; they are "The Death of Chatterton," by H. Singleton, and another on the same subject by John Cranch. The beautiful picture by Wallis, having a similar theme, is well known. It is in the Tate Gallery. There are many other paintings, more or less known, illustrative of various incidents, true or fancied, of Chatterton's career.

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